Railroad Ties

Written by Jenny Underwood and Max Evans

Contributions by: John Boughnah, Herman Cash, Bill F. Combs, Alva Evans

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Published by Back Home Pubs
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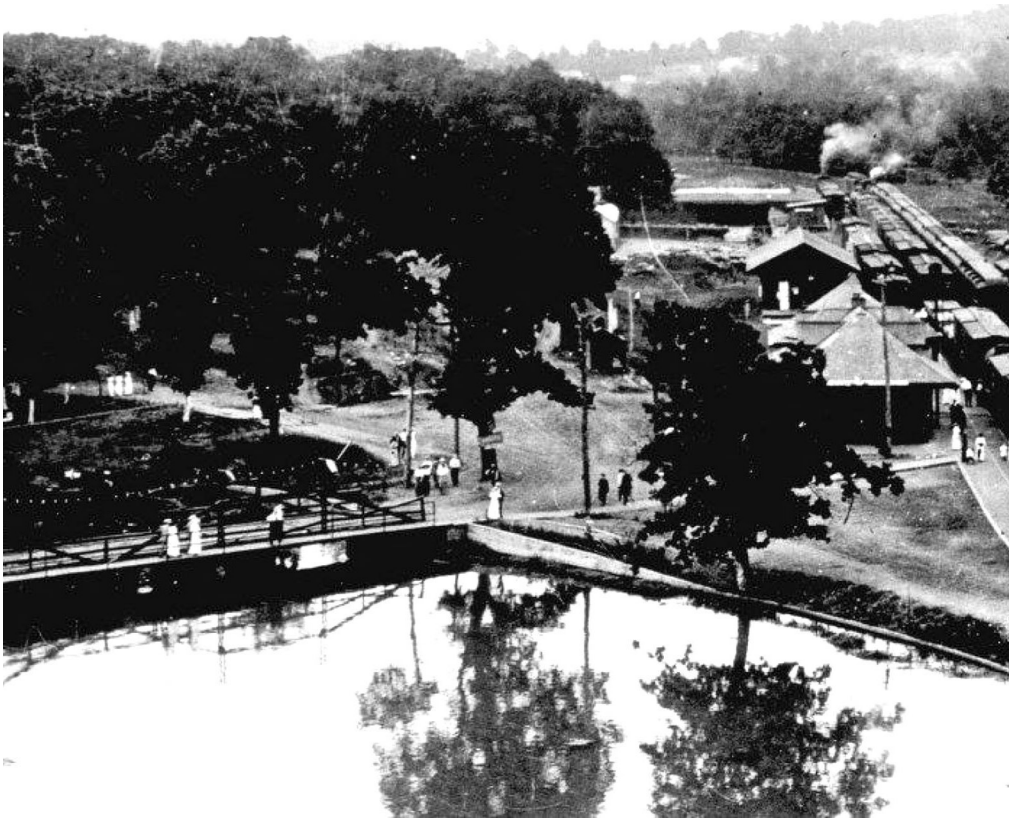
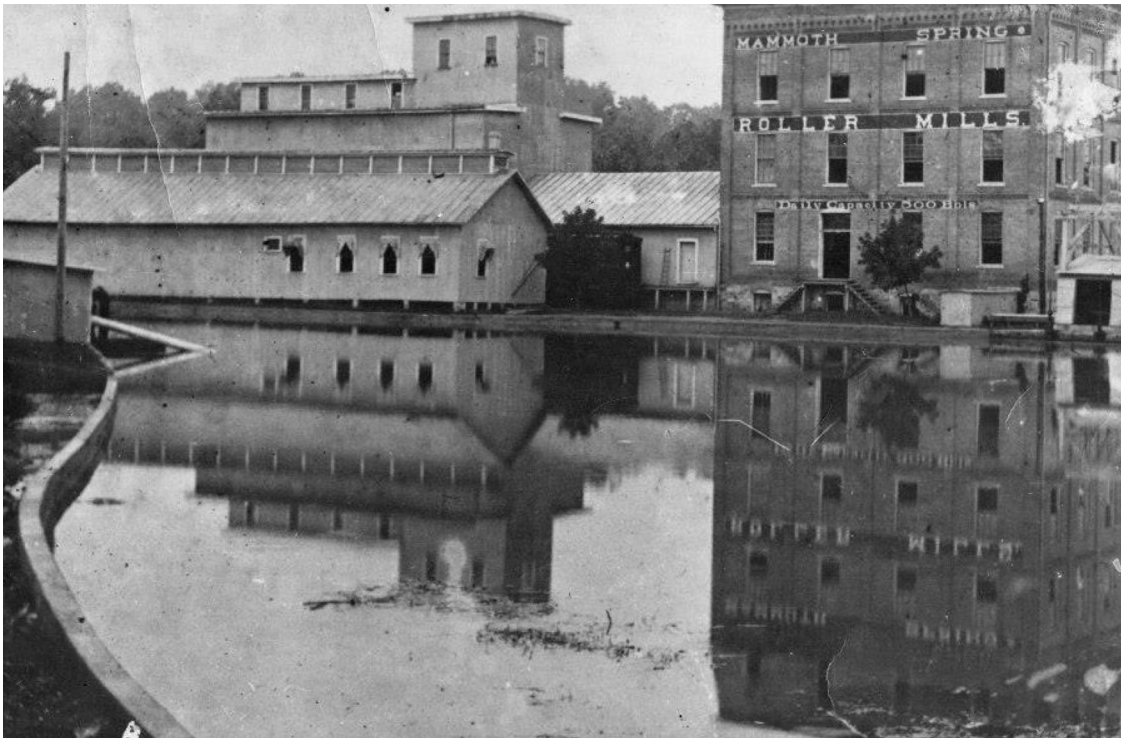
Princess of Umpapa

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE GENERATIONS OF PEOPLE FROM OREGON AND FULTON COUNTY WHO HELPED BRING THE RAILROAD TRACKS, HOTELS, AND-COMMERCE TO THE AREA.



NGLE HOTEL


MAMMOTH SPRING
ROLLER MILLS

SUGAR CREEK INVADES THE OZARKS

Meet Our Thayer Folks

We want our patrons to meet the gar Creek folks who are running gar Creek's newest creamery locat- at Thayer, Missouri. From left to ght standing are J. R. Schultz ack", Manager, Miss Mary "Mar- a" Crockett, office girl, Wm. "Bill" pe, field superintendent, and "Jim" ting on the truck in the back- ound.

Jack and Bill are old creamery men, d have been with Sugar Creek eamery Company for quite some ne. They are both natives of South- ern Missouri and Arkansas. The not only know the country but kno the creamery business as well.

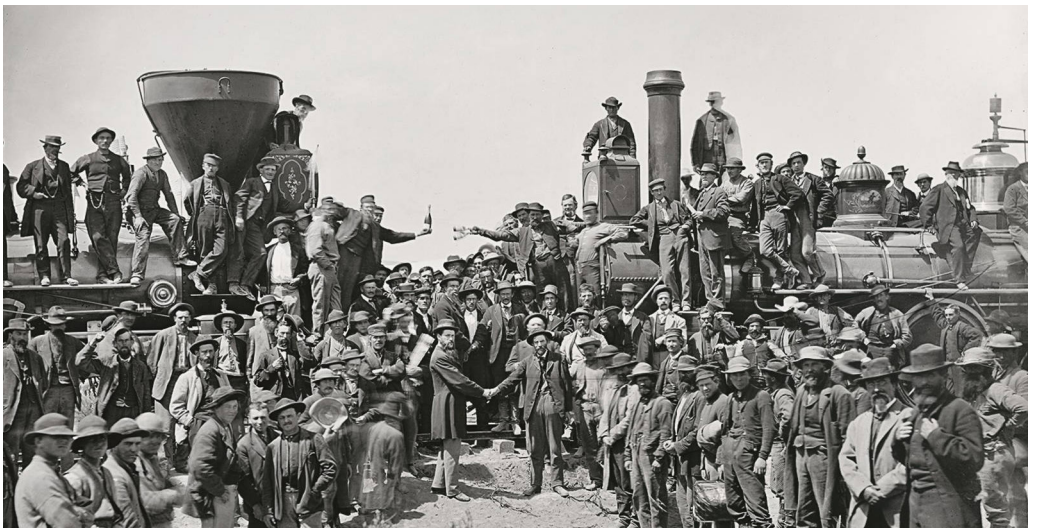
Since the Sugar Creek plant ha opened up at Thayer, these folks hav made some of the best butter eve made in Southern Missouri. They, lik the rest of Sugar Creek Organizatio a great deal of pleasure from d ing their work and doing it well. it takes until midnight to complete job, you will find each one of thes people doing their work with a smil

RAILROAD TIES AND HISTORY

In the Beginning…

The Intercontinental railroad was built across country between 1863 and 1869 to join the eastern and western halves of the United States. Begun just before the American Civil War, its construction was considered to be one of the greatest technological feats of the 19th century. Transcontinental railroads helped open up unpopulated interior regions of continents to exploration and settlement that would not otherwise have been feasible. In many cases they also formed the backbones of cross-country passenger and freight transportation networks.

Wikipedia: Known as the "Pacific Railroad" when it opened, this served as a vital link for trade, commerce, and travel and opened up vast regions of the North American heartland for settlement. Shipping and commerce could thrive away from navigable watercourses for the first time since the beginning of the nation. Much of this route, especially on the Sierra grade west of Reno, Nevada, is currently used by Amtrak's California Zephyr, although many parts have been rerouted.The transcontinental railroad provided fast, safe, and cheap travel. The fare for a one-week trip from Omaha to San Francisco on an emigrant sleeping car was about $65 for an adult. It replaced most of the far slower and more hazardous stagecoach lines and wagon trains. The number of emigrants taking the Oregon and California Trails declined dramatically. The sale of the railroad land grant lands and the transport provided for timber and crops led to the rapid settling of the "Great American Desert". The Union Pacific recruited laborers from Army veterans and Irish immigrants, while most of the engineers were ex-Army men who had learned their trade keeping the trains running during the American Civil War.
The Central Pacific Railroad faced a labor shortage in the more sparsely settled West. It recruited Cantonese laborers in China, who did prodigious work building the line over and through the Sierra Nevada mountains and then across Nevada to their meeting in northern Utah.



This is a picture of the last mile on May 10, 1869 in Promontory Point, Utah. Total miles of track laid 1,776: 690 miles by the Central Pacific and 1086 by the Union Pacific.

The Smithsonian Magazine reported: "The 1,000 or so spectators who cheered on the historic coupling are long gone, but one important witness remains: the Central Pacific railcar that delivered company president Leland Stanford to the summit, likely along with the ceremonial gold and silver spikes. After a long and winding history, that car is now the centerpiece of an exhibition at the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City that commemorates 150 years since the transcontinental railroad's completion. Aside from the spikes, which now belong to Stanford University and the Museum of the City of New York, this car may well be the last mostly intact relic from that transformative moment, says Wendell Huffman, a history curator at the museum and author of a booklet about the car's history. Written evidence shows that the companies eventually scrapped the locomotives, and Huffman says it's "pretty conclusive" that the few other cars present for the ceremony have also been lost over the years. (Another railroad car from the time, which stopped at Promontory in the midst of making the first full rail trip from east to west, survives, but has been converted into a wine shop in California.)"

Read more: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/last-remaining-rail-car-witnessed-transcontinental-railroads-momentous-day-180972137/#2rEOGc7aDflsHIwU.99

The ceremonial spike driven that joined the rails of the transcontinentalrailroad on May 10, 1869 at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory.

"When it came time for Stanford and other Central Pacific officials to head from Sacramento to Utah for the big day, they piled into Crocker's Car, which, along with a baggage car, was delivered to Promontory Point by the since-destroyed locomotive Jupiter.* They carried with them four railroad spikes created for the occasion: a silver spike dedicated by the state of Nevada; a gold-and-silver blend presented by Arizona; a gold spike (which has since been lost) presented by a San Francisco newspaper proprietor; and the iconic Golden Spike, engraved with names, dates and the patriotic message, "May God continue the unity of our Country as this Railroad unites the two great Oceans of the world."

Once Stanford drove in that Golden Spike—or rather, carefully tapped it into a pre-drilled hole—the railroad was officially declared complete, linking east with west and cutting what had been a months-long journey down to about a week. A telegrapher transmitted a simple message, "Done!," to eager bystanders across the country, in a celebration that Huffman describes as a moment of unity for a nation still recovering from the Civil War. The New York Sun depicted a "nation ablaze with unfeigned enthusiasm," with flags waving across New York City and bells ringing out at Trinity Church."

THE THAYER DEPOT

It goes without saying, that Thayer, MO. will forever be linked to the "Frisco Railroad." The Frisco took over the St. Louis, Springfield and Memphis in 1901, actually it was a lease arrangement until an outright purchase in 1928, and operated through Thayer until its merger with the Burlington Northern in 1980 when the Frisco name was dropped.

The story of the Frisco lines starts before a railroad existed west of St. Louis. Work got underway in 1851 on the Pacific Railroad of Missouri. It got to Rolla but was interrupted by the Civil War and went bankrupt in 1865. John C. Fremont, son-in-law of Missouri senator Thomas Hart Benton, bought the line but he only got it to Springfield before it fell into receivership to the Atlantic and Pacific Co. in 1870, it went broke again while squabbling with the Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma in 1873 and was then bought by the newly organized St. Louis-San Francisco Railway Company, commonly called the "Frisco". Mr. B. F. Yoakum became the General Manager and extended the line to Texas.

Mr. Yoakum added to the line and built a new 13 story headquarters building at Ninth and Olive Streets in St. Louis and in 1909 put into operation the largest railroad shops west of the Mississippi in Springfield, Missouri. In 1913, the economy forced the Frisco into bankruptcy again. It was reorganized and operated by W. C. Nixon until the start of WW I when the U. S. Government nationalized all the railroads until after the war in 1920.

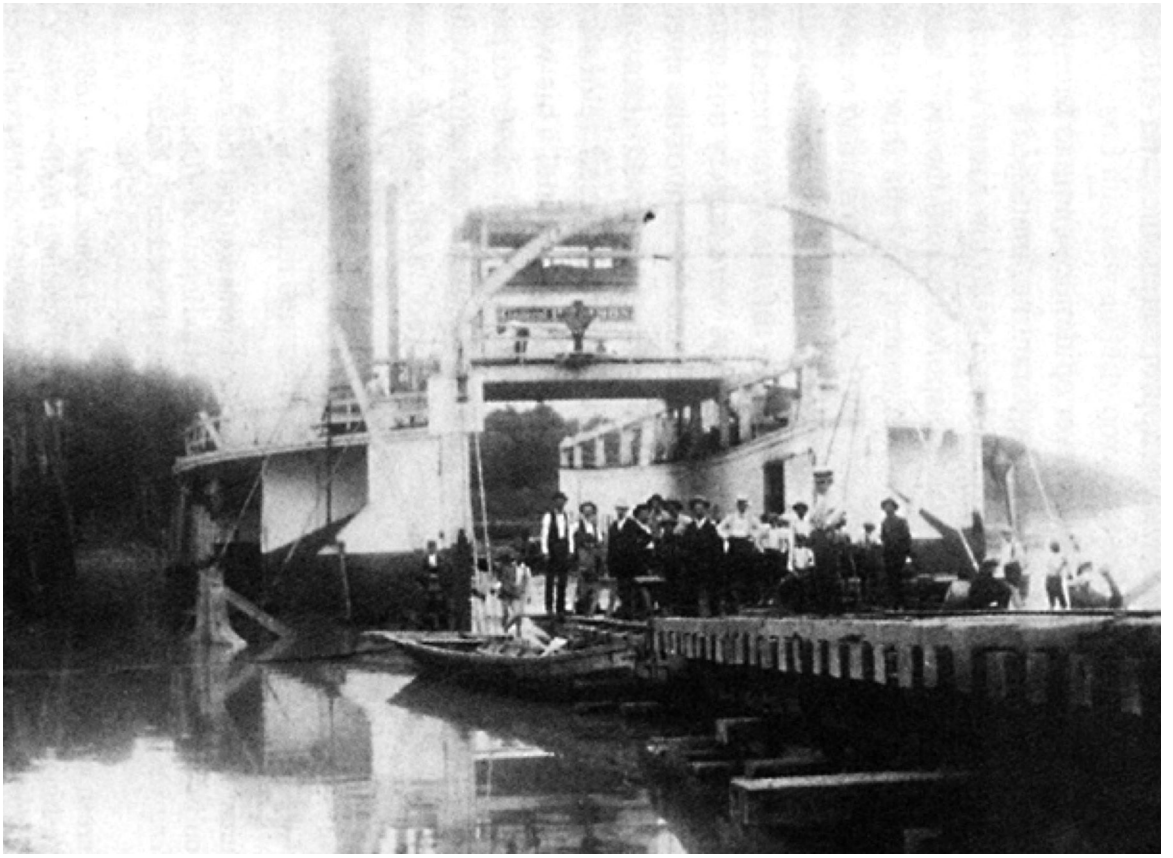
1880'S-1900

The area on the border of Missouri and Arkansas was rural with small villages. The magnificent hills and valleys teaming with wildlife and fish provided sustenance for the farmers and merchants. Grains for bread were milled by early hydro-powered stations built on the Eleven Point River and Spring River in Arkansas. Living off the land was a way of life. By the 1880's most of the Native Americans had moved on. The population was approximately 1200 and the County Seat in Oregon County was in Thomasville, MO. In Fulton County, it was in Salem, Arkansas.

The cross country buildup of the railroad was developing and North/South routes needed to be built. The Kansas City, Springfield and Memphis line led by George H. Nettleton were determined to build a line to Memphis, Birmingham and the Gulf Coast. They reached Springfield from Kansas City in 1881 and began construction from Springfield south to the Arkansas/Missouri line and at the same time began to work from Memphis north, through Arkansas to the connecting point near the state line of Missouri. Experienced locomotive engineers and trainmen moved from other cities and railroads to run the early trains and continued to migrate as the railroad grew exponentially. Laying the tracks across the St. Francis River bottoms in Arkansas was said

to be the most difficult part in the building of the Arkansas segment of the rail line and that part was completed in the fall of 1883.

When it opened May 12, 1892, the bridge was the only one crossing the Mississippi south of St. Louis. Some 50,000 people turned out for an opening celebration featuring a

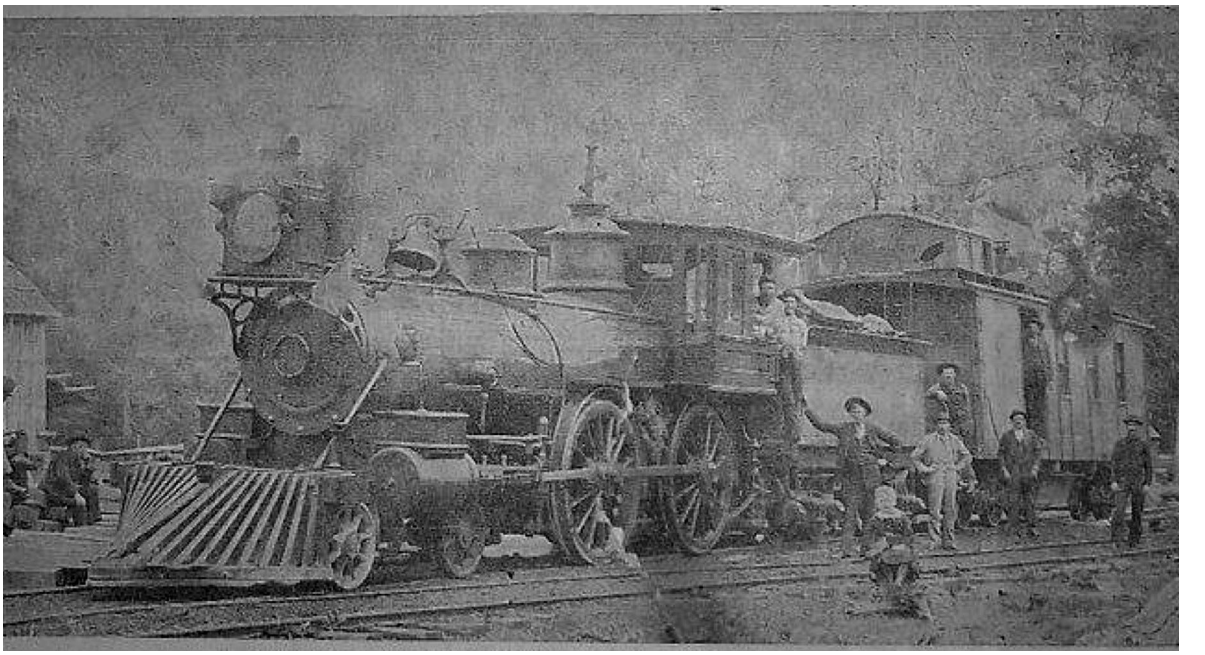


test of 18 locomotives crossing "in solid train" to demonstrate the bridge's strength, according to newspaper accounts. The governors of Tennessee and Arkansas met midway on the span.

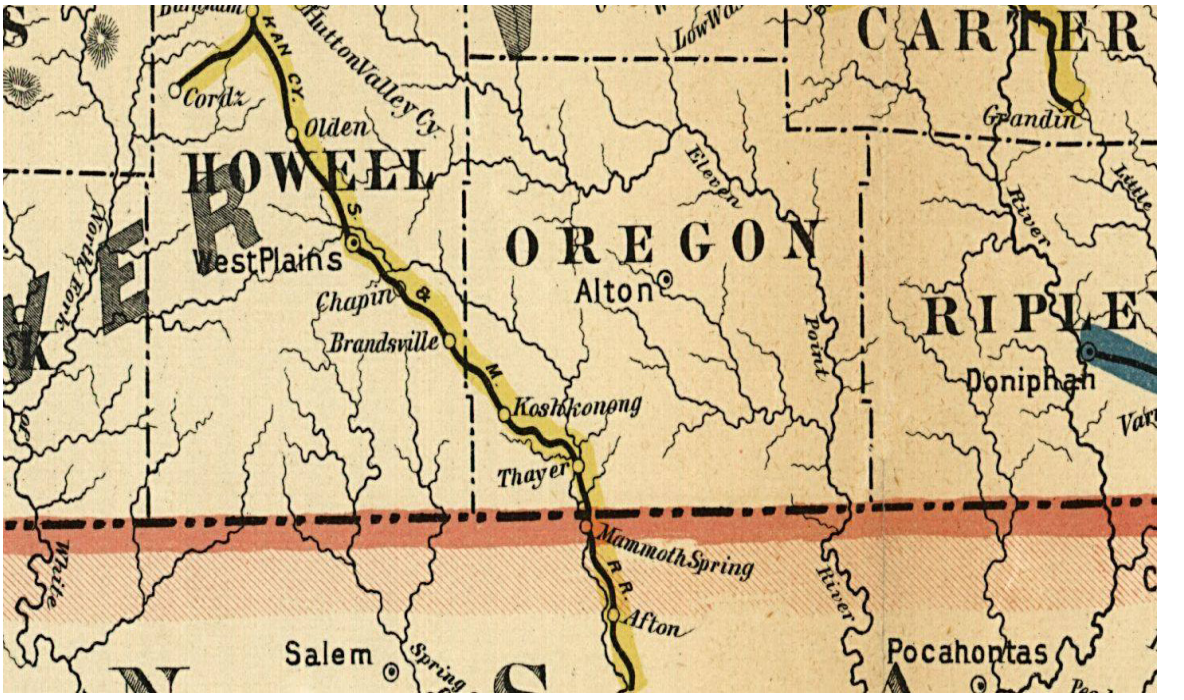
Until a bridge was built across the Mississippi at Memphis, the train engine, cars and coaches were carried, a few at a time, across the Mississippi River on a ferry boat, first by the "George H. Nettleton" and then the "Charles Merriam Ferry".

BUILDING THE TRACKS

Men with teams were contracted to move dirt, pull stumps and haul longs. One contract to furnish beef to the workers in Oregon County was given to N.B. Allen and Joe Gladin and another was issued to the Evans brothers.



1880 Marked Tree “Frenchie” Paulette fired last train across the Mississippi on the Memphis Ferry



A 'division point' was needed in 150 miles increments so that the steam locomotives could be replenished with water, coal and a new train crew. Mammoth Spring, Arkansas, because of its abundant water and relatively flat land had been selected as the division point. Mammoth Spring was a heavenly spot where clear water bubbled up from caves and underground streams at a rate of NINE MILLION gallons per hour providing clean water for the area. But the local people were worried about the water level for health reasons and the price of the land was too high.

In February 1882, they found a spot just two miles north over into Missouri for the new terminal. The railroad bought the property form two pioneer settlers, John Hardwick and Thomas Johnson who had been there since 1855. Streets were platted and Mr. Nettleton named the new village Augusta, taken from his wife's name. In the fall of 1882, they were ready to stake out a new town. They flipped the plat to build the town on the west side of the tracks so they wouldn't have to build a bridge across Warm Fork. Mrs. Nettleton bought the town site of over a hundred acres from the U.S. Government and three sizable farms from Miriam Allen, Robert A. Wilson and Samuel Wooldridge, totaling about 1,000 acres. The streets were named after William Penn's naming the streets of Philadelphia. Streets running away from the river were named Chestnut, Walnut, Spruce and Pine in the south half of the town. The north half of the town streets running west are Market, Arch, Race and Vine. Streets running north and south dissecting the east-west streets are numbered, First, Second, and Third et. al starting at the railroad tracks. W.S. Thompson of Springfield, Missouri, the company's townsite and right of way real estate agent, was on-site and selling lots in 1882.

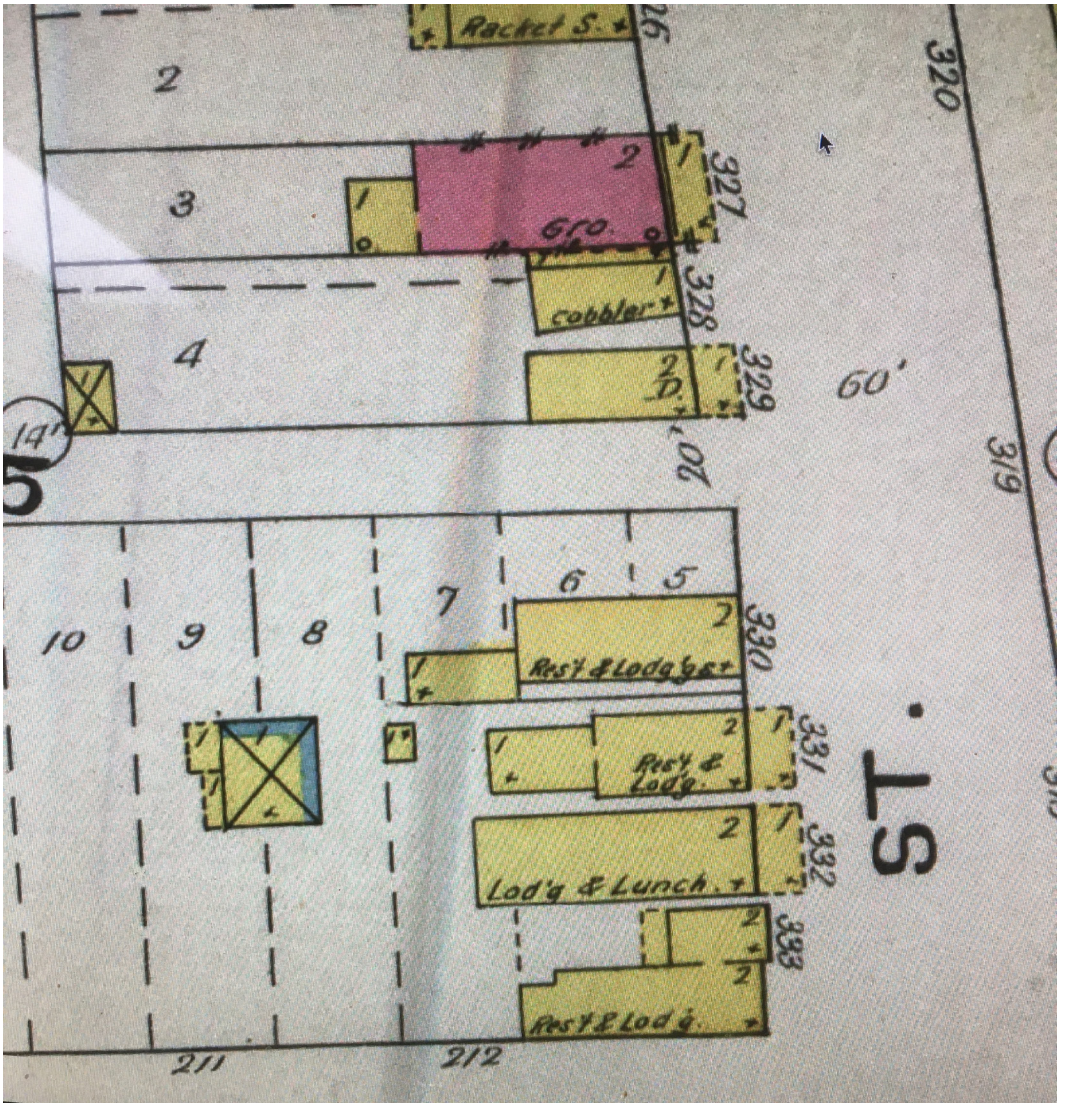
The labor-intensive job of building a railroad brought an influx of workers to the site of the proposed railroad terminal. The roadbed was graded by men under contract with teams of horses and mules but much of the right of way was cleared by hand.

Patrick, Reed and Company was the general contractor to build the railroad. They hired the teamsters and contracted for beef to feed the workers. Several entrepreneurial people like Mr. Stanley at Koshkonong brought in rock crushers to furnish ballast for the road beds. Carpenters were definitely in demand. A steam powered sawmill went into operation at Thayer and was located where the original M. J. Morse (now Cover's) drive through lumber yard in the north portion of Thayer is located. The sawmill was operated by the Tabor brothers.

The coming of the railroad created a veritable industry for cross ties made of oak. The large sawmills that were built in the north part of Oregon County were not a deciding factor in building the railroad but the railroad provided a profitable method for them to send ties and lumber to other places as was the case when creosote treatment facilities began to process the ties. A tie buying facility was established by the railroad at Thayer, near the foot of Vine Street adjacent to the tracks.

Transportation was all horse and buggy (and mules and goats). Roads were rough and going to town was akin to taking a vacation from farm chores.

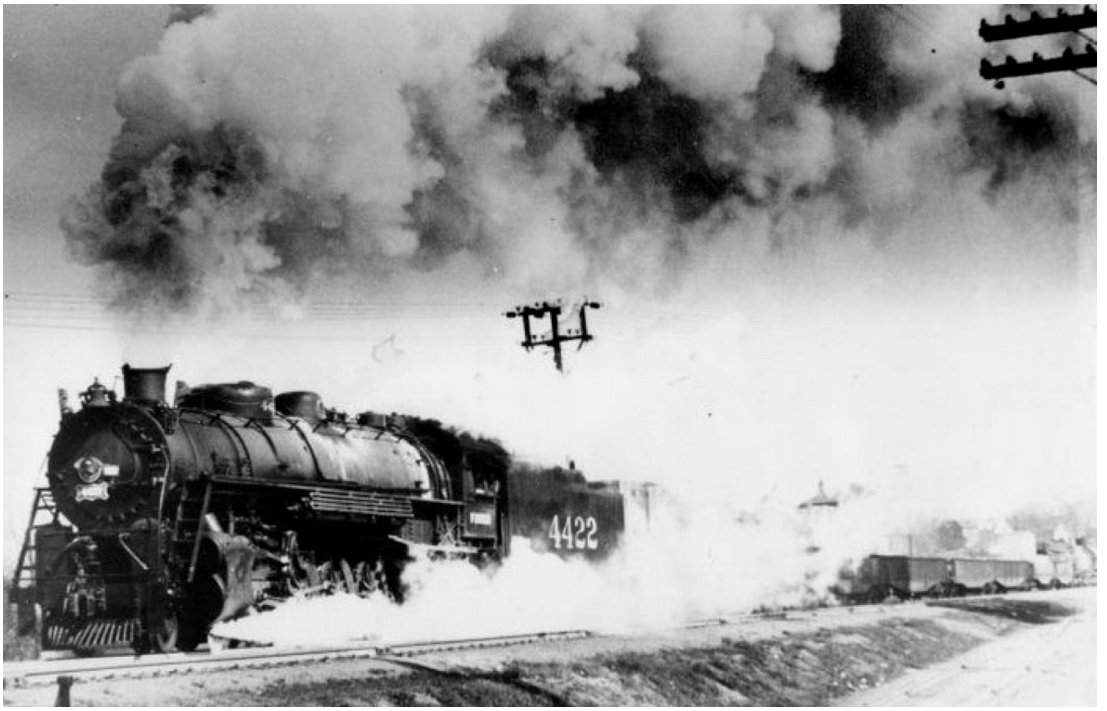
The railroad built ice storage houses, insulated with sawdust, used for storing chunks of ice sawed out of the Warm Fork River when it froze in the winter. The ice was used to cool boxcars and haul perishable produce. A steam powered ice plant was built in 1912, jointly owned by M. J. Morse and Clark Hall.



Construction crews finished laying tracks in March of 1883 from Springfield. By mid-August in 1883 trains were being run from the north into Jonesboro, Arkansas. The first train to run from Kansas city, through Springfield and Thayer to Memphis was on October 20, 1883. It was loaded with meat from Kansas City.

(188x RR steam engine...) Thayer News 1965

"The picture of an old-time steam engine was made at Marked Tree, Arkansas in the 1880s. Fireman on the engine was Nestor "Frenchie" Paulette, father of Virgil Paulette of Thayer. Virgil tells us that his father fired the first engine across the bridge at Memphis, and strangely enough, Mr. Paulette says that his son, Nestor Paulett's grandson, Lewis Paulette, fired the last steam engine to cross the bridge at Memphis. When the diesel engines began to replace the steamers the changeover came fast. Only a few years ago many steam engines were in the Frisco yards here and dozens of the engines passed



through each day. Now about the only place a steam engine can be found is in a museum or park."

People moved to the area and homesteaded on land in the hills that reminded them of their old homes back in Tennessee and Kentucky. They came to work in the huge fruit orchards which sprang into existence from Pomona to Koshkonong all along the railroad right of way. They came as itinerant railroad workers and decided to call it home. Most wouldn't have come if not for the railroad and all the enterprise that came with it.

1900's by Max Evans

First Street, commonly known as Front Street, in Thayer was laid out along side the railroad tracks in nine blocks with four blocks south of the center and four blocks north of the center. It held the earliest constructed buildings in the town. The business center of the town was considered to be between Chestnut on the south and Market Street on the north. First or Front street was considered the "bad" part of town as it contained most of the bars, saloons, hotels and boarding rooms as a result of the construction crews building the tracks and facilities. There was an influx of people moving in, not only to work on the railroad but take advantage of the need to support and profit from the commerce that was brought on by the many people it took to run the trains and handle the freight and passenger business as well as the peripheral needs and opportunities

that goes along with a new town. There was a real shortage of housing from the inception of the town in 1882 until well after 1900.

Trains got to Thayer in 1883 but through trains to Memphis and beyond were not regular for a few more years. The depot was built about 1884-1885 and most of the business establishments along Front Street soon followed.

The original town plats and abstract titles would take a ton of effort and research to produce an accurate accounting of the dates, times and locations of the building of the town. The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps give a very good accounting to how many structures was there at the dates of their maps but historically, not an easy way to determine the nature of the businesses that existed. Newspaper ads by business people is a good way to determine the main business establishments but memories and verbal accounts are the easiest to follow, in my opinion.

Mr. John Boughnou related what he remembered of the business establishments around the turn of the century and Herman Cash gave me a copy of his writeup in the nineteen seventies of his recollections. My memories begin in the late nineteen thirties, then there is a short story by Fred Martin to add to the nineteen twenty recollections.

Here are recollections of John Boughnou, who came as a lad to the town, in 1885 and lived in a hotel for three months because the house his dad, a railroad engineer,

was having built was not complete. He told that in the late 1800s he remembered Front Street as being pretty well built-up from Chestnut Street to the feed mill. That would be the former Tindell and before that the White River Feed and Mill. Following is the script, retyped of his writing about Front Street.

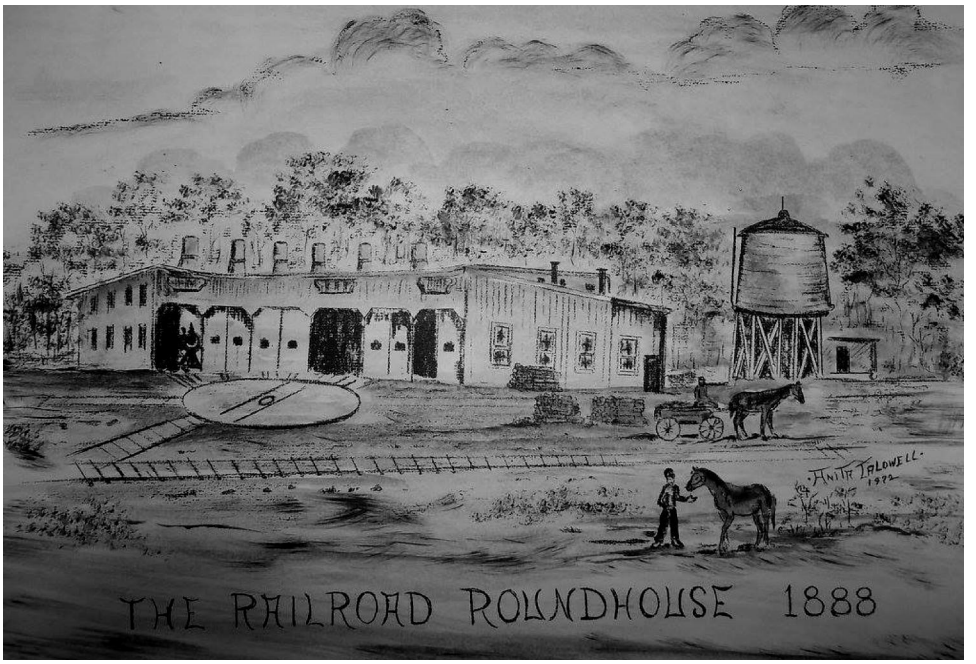
John Boughnou

"I remember located where the Cover Lumber yard now is, was a saw mill operated by two brothers by the name of Taber. My Mother would take us up on the hill above the mill and we would watch the operations of the mill which was very interesting.

Coming back down Front Street, the first house I remember was on the corner of Front and Vine. It belonged to the railroad and was the Section House. Across the street just south was a residence. A family lived in it by the name of Frith and west of that house was a big two-story residence that was owned and occupied by the Watson family. They were the grandparents of Mrs. Maggie Beck of Thayer. Then, on Front Street was a rooming house run by a widow by the name of Lane and next to that was a livery barn run by Mr. Hart. Next, was a hotel operated by a widow, Mrs. Dale. It was later known as the Colonial Hotel. Next to it was a residence. I believe it's about like it was when I was a boy. Next was a two -story rooming house. South of that was a grocery store run by Mr. Jolly. He lived upstairs above the store. Then, there were 3 or 4 two-story buildings, a hotel was in one of them operated by Mr. and Mrs. Mick. He was also the Section foreman on the railroad. He died and several year later his widow married Mr. Forsythe and it was known as the Forsythe Hotel for many years. Mr. Forsythe operated a grocery store next door before he married.

There was a baker in one of the buildings also a large two -story hotel owned by Mr. and Mrs. McCartney. He was a railroad engineer. It later burned down and there has never been anything built on that lot, just north of what is now the **Ingle Hotel**, owned by Dorothy Rethwisch. The Ingle Hotel was built after the McCartney Hotel burned by a widow, Mrs. Fraley. Then, south of that was a two story building, I think was built and owned by Alex Miley, He was an attorney and had his office and living quarters on the first floor. The upstairs was used as rooming house. A barber shop was in the next building. It had three chairs and at the at time hair cuts were 25 cents and a shave was 10 cents. They had a bathroom in connection with the barber shop and I remember hearing them say it was the only place in town where you could get a bath.

As well as I remember, Mr. Carrigan ran a saloon next door. Next to him, was a saloon owned by Pat Foley. There was an inside door connecting the two businesses. The next two buildings on the corner of Chestnut and Front Street belonged to Mr. Sachs. A bake shop was in one building and Sach's General Store was on the corner. They were two-story and the lodge hall was upstairs. (Present day Fun & Friends Senior Center).

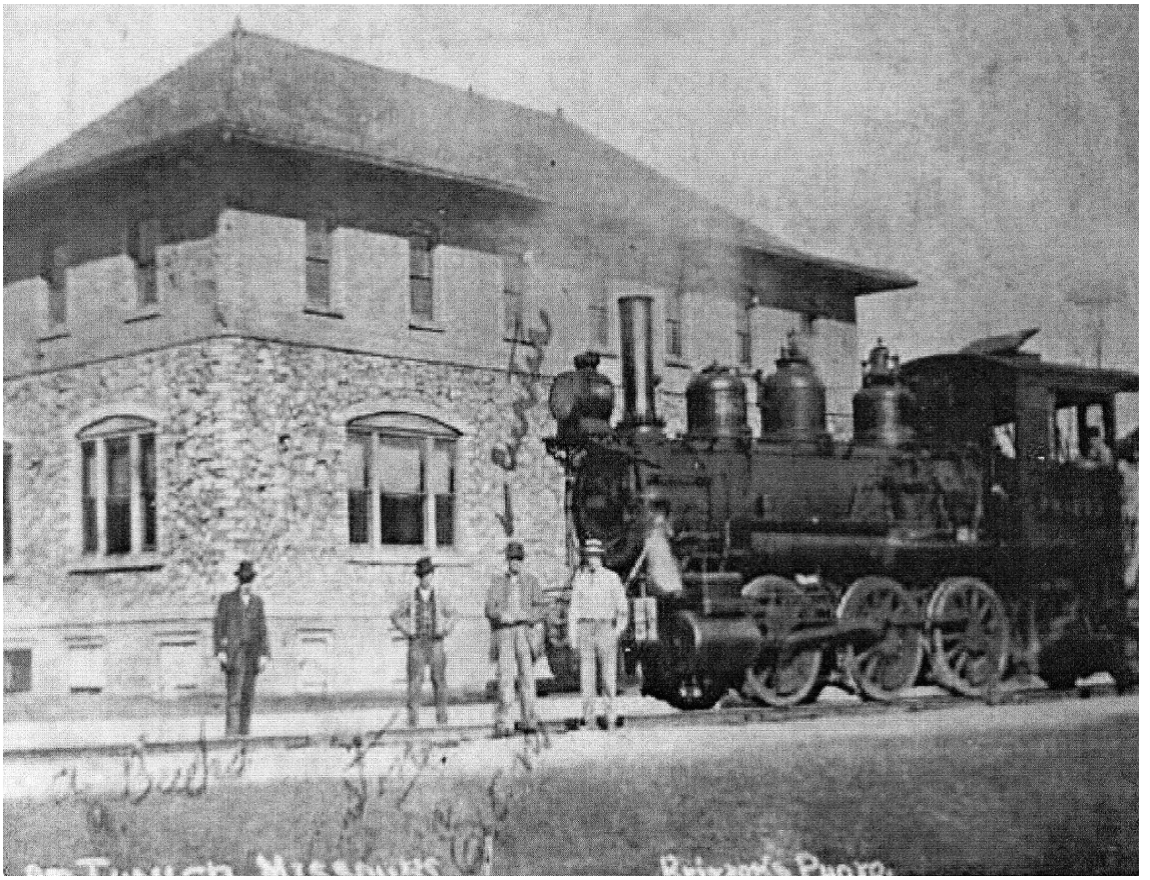


THE DEPOT IN 1940 by Max Evans

Even before the trains were running, an opportunistic element began to flow into the proposed division point. They put in cafes, hotels and saloons facing the tracks on what would become First Street (commonly known as Front Street).

Construction of the actual railroad facilities were already underway in 1881 and took off in earnest in late 1882. A water pipe from Warm Fork to the yards, a coal chute, a depot and of course the switchyards with several miles of track, switches and a round house with its turntable were constructed supported by food and lodging facilities for future passengers. Except for the roundhouse, most of the railroad facilities were operational by 1885. The crews, workers and passenger train riders needed places to stay overnight.

The Depot, was built by the Kansas City, Springfield and Memphis railroad and became operational with the first through trains sometime around 1884, It was a big boxy frame two-story building.You couldn't say much about it's architecture or looks but it was very functional for its day with a hall that ran east and west through the center of the building. The north side of the building was used by the Freight Agent. Remember, everything was shipped by train in those days, and it was a busy place. New cars were shipped in boxcars in that day as well as animals, milk, vegetables and packages. Around the turn of the century, Koshkonong was declared the peach capital of the "world." It became profitable for the railroad to ship the train loads of peaches in cars with ice loaded



into compartments at the ends of the cars. At first the ice was cut from nearby Warm Fork river and stored in buildings with sawdust as insulation. Then around 1912, Clark Hall and M. J. Morse built an ice plant. The ice plant was eventually taken over by the city around 1920.

Clark Hall was the manager of the hotel in the upstairs of the Depot at the beginning of trains, then a few years later, the railroad decided to get out of the lodging business. That's when the Irwin Hotel went into service just across the street from the depot. Clark Hall was the first manager of the new hotel as well but soon went into other businesses in the town. He and M. J. Morse were two of the shakers and movers of the new railroad town. Clark Hall died in 1928 at age 67 but M. J. Morse, who had stores and the lumber yard at Thayer, lived until the age of 83 and died in 1957.

The Depot was the nerve center of the town, open 24/7 as they say, now. The ticket office and telegraph operaters room, with the clicking telegraph keys, was in the south-east corner of the depot on the side where the railroad tracks ran north and south. The waiting room for the passengers was on the same side of the building and opened into the hall-way that led to the platform adjacent to the tracks. On the south west corner of the first floor, when I was a kid was the dispatcher's office. The dispatcher

had a big wooden desk with cubby holes up on the wall where the train orders were kept. It was the conductor's job to get the orders and bills of lading and take them with him on the train. The engineers got a set of orders as well but they got them from a small building just south of the depot.

It was quite an operation and as a kid, it was exciting to just get up close to the trains. I don't know how to describe it, but when the big steam engines came huffing and puffing into the station with the bell clanging loudly, it made an impression, on a young

guy, that has lived there all my life. I love trains. The steam train whistles were also unforgettable. The engineers had slightly, different ways they blew the whistle, and many people could tell who it was. I know, I count myself fortunate to have been around the trains and being from a railroad family, it was a way of life. The railroad men operating out of Thayer had a good reputation from what I have read, that is in the skills and knowledge in how to run the trains.

The upstairs of the depot were offices, used by the officials of the railroad. That is, the upstairs in 1940 but at the outset, or start of the railroad, the second floor were hotel rooms for the ticket holders and travelers on the trains. The higher-ranking men at the division point of Thayer had titles, including the Assistant Superintendent, the highest level of anyone assigned to work at the terminal. There was a Yardmaster, who was in charge of the yards, switching crews, and etc. The Chief Clerk was just that and an important cog in the operation of the the depot. On the opposite side of the tracks, on the east side, closer to Warm Fork River, was the roundhouse where the engines and train cars were maintained and repaired. Out in front of the round house was a turntable, used to line up the tracks so that engines could be drove into and out of the roundhouse and also to turn the engines around to go the opposite direction.

The mail was carried exclusively on the trains. They did a great job back in that day in the delivery and handling the mail. The mail cars that were a part of the passenger trains were owned and manned by U. S. Federal Agents. They sorted the mail on the run and used large slanted tables where they dumped the canvas bags full of envelopes and then threw them into bags hanging on the walls. The bags were labeled with the name of towns.

You can see how fast the mail could be delivered to points along the railroad. Some of the agents wore pistols as payrolls and valuables were shipped on the trains that had a long history of train robberies.

Just to the north of the depot was a turn around and parking place for trucks and cars to temporarily load and unload goods and passengers. At that time, a small crowd met most trains, especially during the day, some just to watch and see who was coming and going. It was sort of a social event as the trains came into and left the station.

Things that differentiates that day from today, along with the sights and sounds of the steam trains were the spittoons in the waiting rooms and the coal stoves. There was a distinct odor, in the depot, not necessarily bad or good, just not duplicated today in any place I have been. The depot, downstairs, had high ceilings and was dimly lit, as opposed to what we are used to, today.

Just north of the depot was a non-descript longer building and several small building owned by the railroad, I was told that section gang foremen had once lived in the small houses that were close to the tracks.

Outside on the south side of the Depot was a large lawn, landscaped with trees and shrubs. It was immaculately kept, for many years, by Mr. Wooldridge, and once won a company award. It seemed like the railroad lost interest in the way things looked after WW II and the grounds gradually gave way to gravel parking lots. Back in the day, a steel pipe fence with ornamental cement posts separated the lawn and the "asphalt platform" along side the tracks.

The first coal chute was made of wood and located on a spur at the left side of the main line just south of the town crossing. This early one was very labor intensive and required several men to shovel coal from the railcars. It was replaced by an all steel structure sometime around 1939 and was the tallest structure in the town measured from the base to the top. After the steam locomotives were replaced by diesel engines in 1952, the metal coal chute was brought down by explosives in 1954.

The water spout, a huge faucet like affair with a rope that opened a valve when it was swung out over the top of the engines, was located at the north edge of the YMCA

building which would be directly behind the present day Thayer Police Station. The railroad had its own Water Department.

RAILROAD SHOPS BUILT TO HOLD WATER AND COAL

Construction boomed in Augusta (renamed Thayer) as more workers moved in and business places flourished. The population was 1,143 in 1890 an reached 1,276 according to the 1900 census. After about 1900 trains traveled at night, with the advent of Pullman sleeping cars and dining cars. The railroad hotel was closed and private hotels such as the Commercial Hotel (later the Erwin), owned by Ben May and the New Albany operated by Mrs. Brewer, hosted railroad travelers.

In 1889, Augusta had:

- four grocery stores
- seven hotels
- two butcher shops
- two cabinet and coffin shops
- a carpenter shop
- two shoe stores
- two livery stables

- two millinery shops
- two general merchandise stores
- two blacksmiths
- three drug stores
- a furniture store
- two attorneys
- a justice of the peace
- clothing store
- four saloons
- a loan office
- three restaurants
- a barber shop

According to Sanborn Maps of 1900 and 1906 the hotels were:

On Chestnut:
- New Albany Hotel adjacent to the First Baptist Church
- Thayer Hotel and Restaurant where Southern Bank resides
- Hotel Westfall 1888

On Front Street:
- Restaurant & Lodging per Sanborn Map of 1900 B possibly the Colonial Hotel operated by Mrs. Dale.
- Another Restaurant & Lodging operated by Mr. & Mrs. Vick and called the Forsythe Hotel.
- Irwin Hotel ran by Mrs. Irwin and later ran by the Rooneys from Alabama in 1950.
- J. M. Brady Hotel in Block 15, Front Street at Market
- McCartney hotel burned nad is now a vacant lot beside Ingle Hotel
- Ingle Hotel for Boarding and restaurant and Lodging (Shown on Sanborn Maps 1894 and 1900 but not on 1906)
- Railroad Hotel on the railroad side of the street with hotel, dining room, offices and waiting room for travelers.

Past Market Street:

- Ozarks Hotel where the large white building, Toomey Cargo sits. It had a kitchen, dining room, office, bakery and poultry and egg store. It was owned by Anna Forsyth in 1889.
- City Hotel where Creative Poverty has a shop

1900 - 1966

HOTELS

In 1918, The Hotel Arkisson was sold to the Hunt and became Hunt Hotel. IN 1929 Hotel Dreher was sold to J.O. Cooper and became the Cooper Hotel.

In 1918 there was: the Hotel Hunt, Hotel Dreher and Colonial hotel (which went up for sale in 1920)

In 1922, Mr. & Mrs. Hall had the August Hotel for 12 years.

In 1930 Mrs. Ingle had a bridge club. Later says she owned for 10 years with her husband who was a Frisco Clerk

In 1931 the Ingle Cafe opened up south of Ingle Hotel

1936 Mrs. Dorothy Rethwisch bought Ingle Hotel from Mrs. P.A.F. Ingle

FRONT STREET HISTORY

The Round House went in sometime later, possibly as late as 1913 on the far side of the yards across from the depot. It had a turntable that turned the locomotives

for travel in the opposite direction. There were tracks going into each of the large doors of the roundhouse that an operator lined up with the turntable to put the engines inside the roundhouse. Here again, the roundhouse building came down in the mid nineteen fifties after the diesel engines took over. The roundhouse foreman was a very responsible job with machinists, pipefitters, helpers and clerks working under him.

There was a triangular open area where the farmers, from east of town, tied their teams of horses and also cars parked heading in toward the west along

side the Winston Building. Basically that is today the area where the First Street goes up and hits Walnut. The Whistle Stop Stage is also located near that area.

YMCA BUILDING

On the east side of the First Street and adjacent to the railroad tracks (approximately where the police station now sits) was the Y. M. C. A. building, a stone and brick two story building with outside steps on the south side of the building leading down into the basement where a barbershop and beauty shop was located. Mr Trimble had the barber shop and Eva ran the beauty shop. In 1940, one of the beauty operators was my aunt Ruth Cox who had graduated from Thayer High School in the class of 1939.

The handsome Y. M. C. A. building was built in 1912 by M. J. Morse. It filled the need for single guys to have clean, reasonably priced sleeping rooms, especially those who were from out of town and working on the railroad. It was also a recreational and leisure time gathering place for men. Also, in the basement was an indoor swimming pool, quite an amenity in that day and time for such a small town.

On the first floor was the office area at the top of the stairs from the basement and foot of the stairs to the second floor where the sleeping rooms were located. The first floor had a lounge area where dominos and chess tables were kept busy as well as a reading area with magazines and the current daily newspapers, brought in on the passenger trains. More than one older guy told me that they learned more reading at the "Y" than in their high school classes.

A large front room was on the west side of the first floor where meetings and business took place and then a gym with a basketball court was on the north wall of the "Y" building. It was the first indoor gym in the county, put there sixteen years before there were any gyms in Oregon County schools and that one was at Koshkonong, built in 1928.

One former resident wrote: "Growing up, I'm here to tell you we were not underprivileged! In fact, our family had one of the best outdoor privies in town. We had the privilege of living on a hillside -- about everything was done on a hillside, for there were hardly any level spots in the whole town. But the downtown area of our town was level, for the most part. And one of my favorite places in downtown Thayer was the Y.M.C.A, which stood next to the railroad station, and which had equally attractive flora and fauna. I think it was rather unusual that a town of 1,680 population had a YMCA, but we had one -- and enjoyed it -- until one day it burned down.

There was something approaching the religious about this large room at the YMCA (which was as open to the public as a public library.) I mean this place seemed to reflect a kind of immortality in its timelessness. It was a gathering place for many of the railroad men in town, as well as certain business owners and workers who had nothing else to do-- which was not infrequently during the Depression years of the 30s.

Here these men could sit quietly and play checkers, or discuss great schemes, or tell tales of their past and dream of the future. In fact, if some of the tales they told were true, and if that YMCA could have spoken, many of them would live on."

Charley Cockman, a Thayer business man, was one of the men who was playing checkers in the lounge area of the Y.M.C.A when they smelled smoke. The fire burned out the interior of the first and second floors and a hole in the roof. That was in November of 1943. A lot of us school kids ran down Chestnut to watch the townsmen and the fire department fight the spectacular fire. Unfortunately, Mr. Lark, who was the secretary and ran the YMCA had not paid the insurance premium so after that, the building sat empty until 1955 when the railroad, who had taken the building over in default, because it was on their property demolished it.

Rumors through the years, often surfaced, about some new use for the building, but none came to fruition. Mr. Boughnou, who decided to run for mayor of the town, on the platform that the city should take the building from the railroad and make it a multi-purpose town center but the railroad said they had grand plans for the building and that was to refurbish it and make it into a ticket office and waiting room for the passenger trains. Shortly, less than a year later, the Frisco sent one of their bridge crews into town and took the building down in just a few days. A true loss for the town and a shame because I can testify, after attending boy scout meetings for a year or so and being in the building many times as a youngster that it was built like a tank and with its native stone exterior was a nice looking old building.

FRONT STREET OUTLAWS IN THE 1920'S TOLD BY ALVA EVANS AND HERMAN CASH

Gambling had been outlawed in the town in the town, and the clean level floor made of the stacked ties made a good place to have card and dice games. The ties were arranged in a way so that the gamblers were hidden from the street.

It was in this area that one of the town's better doctors, Dr. Cottrell, met his death. It was never determined why or how he was shot. It was known that he liked to drink and play cards with the crowd. One night, he either staggered or was brought to his home by some of the players, where he died soon afterward from the gunshot wound. He was an expert poker player and it was presumed that he was killed and robbed of his winnings. It was one of the first murders, in the town, that Herman could remember.

Beyond the tie yard was Bateman's produce, where they stored feed and house live and dead produce to be shipped. This business was part of the same business that was located on Chestnut Street and became the main part of the business after Joe Cockman bought it.

Next on the track side of Front Street the Standard Oil storage tanks for the distribution of wholesale Gas and kerosene to merchants.

There was a tie-yard beyond the gas tanks and then some distance to the ice and cold storage plant owned and operated by Mr. Clark Hall. Herman said that as a boy, he and his brother did odd jobs for the Hall's and received a dime a day for working all day. Adults in that day and time earned about 30 cents an hour or $3.00 for a ten hour day. Beyond the ice plant was a lumber yard and planning mill owned by M. J. Morse and his father-in-law Mark Whitman.

Back at the starting place, Chestnut and First or Front Street, which is used both ways to describe the same street, but on the west side of the street, according to Herman from the Sacks store on the corner was a saloon. Jim Ricketts, the husband of Rhea, was killed by a friend while having friendly drinks. An argument ensued when Ricketts tried to get the friend to quit drinking and go home. The friend, in a drunken fit of anger, pulled a pistol and shot Ricketts.

After passing another couple of business places was another saloon owned by Phil (Pat) Carrigan, one of the earliest business places in the town. About 1901, Pat was shot and killed by his bartender in some unusual circumstances, whether accidental or what, is not clear. The reason everyone remembers the story is because of his wife Sarah, a stocky Irish woman had her husband buried in an above ground mausoleum at the Thayer cemetery with a glass lid covering the casket. She spent a large part of her time, sitting in the cement building conversing with her dead husband. Eventually, the casket had to be covered because vandals shot holes in the clear glass cover of the casket. When Sarah died, 1934 the tomb was sealed and locked. Herman said, she was shunned for many years in Thayer because of her unkempt ways but that she was friendly. He said, when he delivered the Springfield paper, he often dropped one on her porch as a courtesy.

Next to the Corrigan's saloon was the Gibbons café owned by Joe and Ma Gibbons. Joe worked on the railroad and a lot of railroaders ate at the café, Mrs. Gibbons ran. It had several bedrooms on the second floor and in the memory of Herman, it seemed to have more "waitresses" than was needed to serve the food and there was a good bit of gossip about went on at the establishment. Herman said, that he knew Mrs. Gibbons and was wary of her, he felt uneasy toward her. He also knew a lawyer, named Joe, who was divorced and roomed over the café. Everyone knew the lawyer was "friendly" with the Gibbon's pretty daughter. Joe the lawyer, died suddenly and after he was buried, the authorities, becoming suspicious from the rumors and insinuations, decided to exhume the body. When they did, they found no entrails in the man. His heart, lungs and liver were gone. Nothing was ever proven but some people thought that the man could have been poisoned and then done that way to keep anyone from ever discovering it.

Next north to the Gibbons café was a bakery. It was named the Home Bakery and ran by Oscar Sessions. They made pies, cookies, donuts, bread and roasted peanuts furnishing them to all the grocery stores in the vicinity until the latter part of the 1920s when the bakeries in Springfield and Memphis began shipping in baked goods. Mr. Sessions stayed in business until the early 30s and sold to Loren Bauer but the bakery soon went out of business.

The large Dreher Hotel was operated by "Mother Dreher". It was the hotel built and operated by Clark Hall when the railroad decided to close the railroad hotel inside the depot. (max – later the Irwin). They both knew Dorothy Rethwisch but they didn't know the history of the hotel.

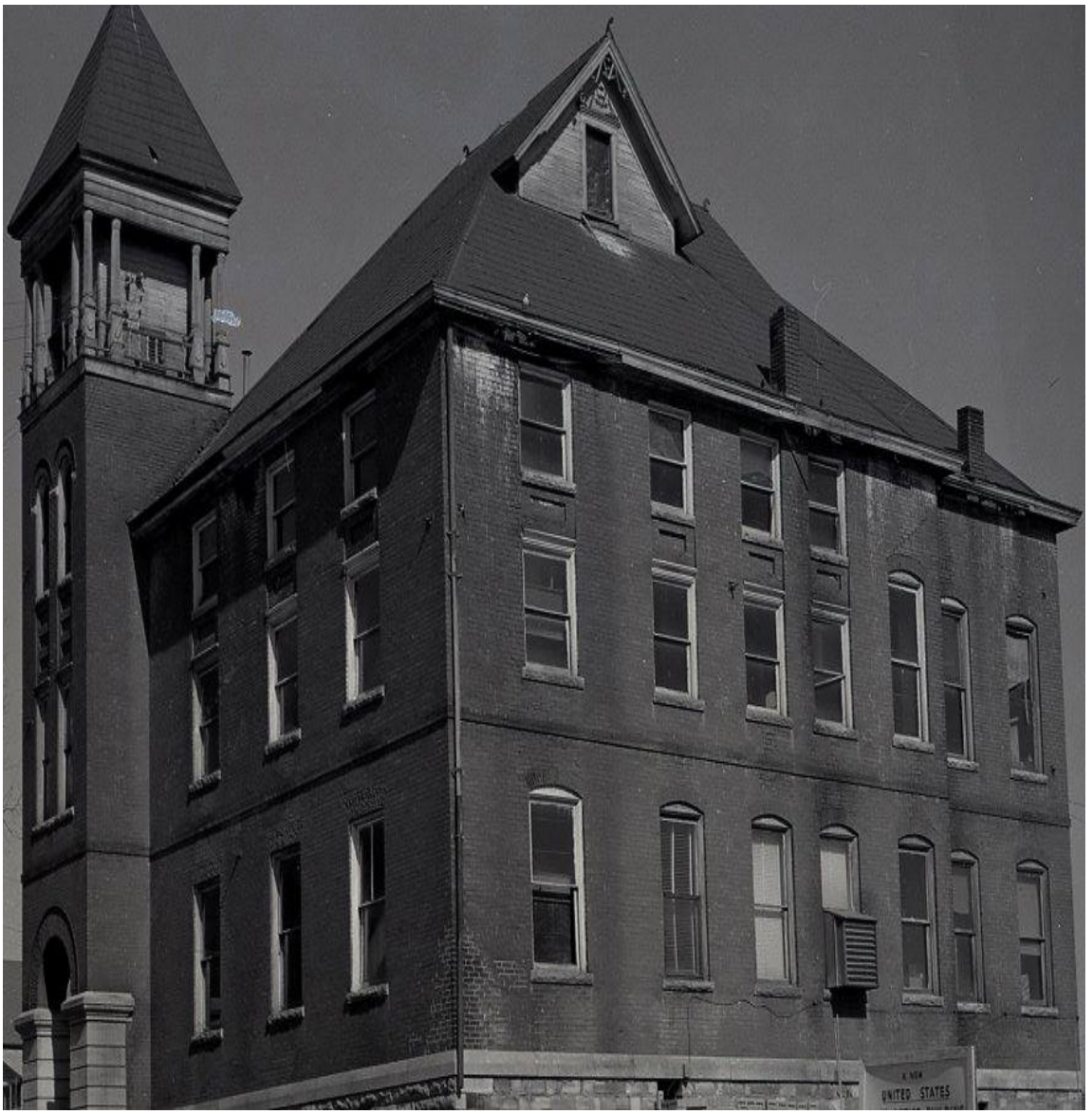
They also didn't mention the places north of the Ingle but remembered the Colonial. It was run by Mrs. Meyer in the twenties. On beyond the Colonial Hotel was another wagon yard and a blacksmith by the name of Mr. King. There were four wagon yards in the town as they required a good bit of space and were usually frequented by people coming from that direction so they could tie up before they went into the close confines of the business section. Although, in many instances they would stack the supplies and purchases in front of the businesses and drive their wagons along side to load up on their way out of town.

An incident that happened on Front street in Thayer, was told to me by my friend, Elwyn Martins uncle, Fred Martin who moved to California years ago and is no longer living. Fred said that he would never forget it because he was involved.

It happened on election night, November 5, 1920. A large crowd had gathered at the Opera House in order to hear the election returns on M. J. Morse's new radio, one of the first in the town. Election day in that day, carried a lot of excitement, intrigue and interest before radio and television readily makes known the results. Especially for the state and national numbers, it sometimes took days to learn of the winners.

Fred was a young man and was down on Front Street and encountered Riley Leach, who had been drinking and was terrorizing people with his pistol. He had already been told to leave the Opera House where people were trying to listen to the election returns. Riley, then went to Front street and intimidated several people including the women working in Gibbon's café. Fred said, "When he went into the café, the women were cowering in the back and showed him several bullet holes that Riley had put into the front door".

When Fred left the café on his way to the Y. M. C. A, Riley Leach followed him down the sidewalk and shot several times in his direction. He continued to follow Fred into the Y.M.C.A. There he shot the glass face out of the wall clock and then shot several times into the ceiling where people were in the rooms above. That's when young Fred became agitated and went home to get his revolver to protect himself. Fred's dad, G. W. Martin was the night Marshall and when he was told of the situation, strapped on



Thayer, MO Opera House

his revolver. He lived just up from the Opera house and had a short walk down the hill to Front Street and when he got down there, Riley was coming up the sidewalk toward him. They met on the high sidewalk across from the depot and G.W. confronted Leach but Leach would not put down his gun and began to aim it at Martin. Martin shot Leach four times and the force of his bullets knocked him off the high sidewalk to the street. Some men carried Leach into a hotel on Front Street where he soon died from his wounds.

FRONT STREET IN THE 1940's BY MAX EVANS

The first commercial building to the north of the depot on the same side of the street was Underwood's Feed and Grocery. Ralph Sr. who had been a railroad man, ran that store up until sometime in the sixties or seventies. His son, Ralph, Jr. and his sons live in the area today. Today, it is a feed store and has no resemblance of the store that was there in the forties and fifties.

At that time, the McClure Cheese plant was a fairly large operation and located in the next building north, alongside the tracks. It would have been across from the bus station that is no longer there and the Colonial Hotel that is now a used store. The plant bought milk from local farmers via trucks that had routes to pick up the cans of milk and bring them to the cheese factory. They would dump the milk and return the cans back to the trucks through a window and conveyer to be taken back to the farmer the next day.

It was a viable business and employed several men to perform the back-breaking work of handling those cans and stirring the raw products to make cheese as well as load the finished cheese products on train cars for shipment. The last time, I recall being there, the stairs to the offices upstairs at the Cheese Plant was still there on the south side of the building. The manager of the store and a secretary was in those offices and sometimes the owner.

On north and built onto the north end of the former Cheese Plant is a building labelled Thayer Plant Food. It was not there in the forties.

The next building and business north of the Cheese Plant, in 1940 was the White River Feed and Milling Company. It was owned and operated by Tom Dawe and George Landes. Tom had moved to Thayer from Kansas and George was from the west somewhere. Tom was married to Ann Naismith Dawe who was the daughter of James Naismith, the inventor of basketball. Her sister, Helen Dodd also moved to Thayer and taught at the high school before moving away in the forties. George was single when he came to Thayer. He married Mary Alford. The White River Milling was a busy enterprise and delivered feed in trucks in a wide range, especially in north Arkansas and east of Thayer.

Just north of the White River Milling Company, at the foot of Vine and adjacent to the railroad tracks were a set of gas tanks on stilts that was a distribution point for Standard Oil. In 1940, Norval Taylor operated the ton-and-a-half tank truck that delivered gas to businesses and gas stations in a wide area. Norval was the son of T. Shelt Taylor, who operated a grocery and gas station on south 63. Norval's wife Mable, was a teller at the Thayer Bank.

A short distance north of the gas tanks and on the railroad right-of-way was a set of cattle pens where the railroad often unloaded cattle and horses for rest, feed and water per the Interstate Commerce Commission rules which dictated the maximum number of hours that animals could be hauled in the cattle cars on the trains before they were rested and fed. Then they were loaded back on the trains for the completed trip to the slaughter-house or where ever they were going. It was also a collection point for local farm and ranches to drive their stock to the pens for shipment. At times, a group of horses would be put in those pens by horse traders to sell or trade. The horses always grew a crowd and a good bit of selling and trading took place. It was fun to hang out and watch the horses being rode and shown. My friend, Jimmy Trimble's granddad bought him a mustang horse out of those pens. I remember it well and rode my pony with Jimmy and some other boys.

There was a tie-yard, where the railroad bought ties, just north and adjacent to the stock-pens but it was moved to Mammoth Spring sometime in the early part of the forties. It was operated by the Frisco Railroad and at that time, run by Mr. Spangler. There was also an open place near there that trucks could park adjacent to the box cars and unload merchandise that was too heavy to be taken to the freight office in the depot. It was a source of income for young guys to get a job there helping unload the boxcars of things like cement, lumber, hay and other items.

Going on north along the tracks adjacent to First Street would take us to the Light Plant and Ice Plant all operated from the same set of buildings. The Missouri-Arkansas Power company had run a line from Arkansas into Thayer at an early day, that

furnished electricity to businesses and homes. The energy was created by a series of

three Dams on Spring River generating hydroelectric power.

The Ice Plant was built by Clark Hall and M. J. Morse in 1912 and apparently it was a good business. The railroads used ice in the fruit trains to ship the trainloads of peaches out of Oregon and Howell county plus the businesses and homes used ice. They sold the plant to the city in 1922 About 1926, the ice plant began to run on electricity instead of engine driven generator sets. The ice plant shut down in 1964, after most people had refrigerators.

As the Depression began to wear off, the demand for electricity began to increase. When the town leaders at Thayer learned that nearby West Plains received more favorable electric rates from the Ark-Mo Power Company, they began to negotiate and finally decided to generate their own power when the power company did not give them a new rate. Alderman Joe Harlin, looked into the situation and led the way for the town to buy new engines to generate their own power. In 1937, the town council awarded a contract to the Fairbanks-Morse Company of St. Louis to purchase diesel engines to drove electric generators to make electricity. This upset the power company and a breakdown in negotiations resulted. Thayer got their new engines installed but they were not ready to turn then on when the town's contract with the power company ran out. The town asked for an extension, but the power company would not give it to them unless they would agree to a longer extension. At any rate, the power company workers were ordered to cut the electric lines leading into the city at the city limits. It was on a Thursday, April 22, 1938 when the town went dark. It was known as "The day the

lights went out." The coal oil lamps once again were called on to give out their familiar glow while the town appealed to the Missouri Public Service Commission who ordered the lights back on but it took two or three days before the service was restored. During the outage, merchants brought in portable generators at a high cost to try to save their meat and dairy products. The new light plant at Thayer finally came on-line on Tuesday, June 23, 1938.

The twin 225 horsepower engines, at the light plant, ran on fuel oil that the city was able to have shipped in on the railroad on tank cars at one cent per gallon.

The city electric system operated at a profit center until the nineteen fifties, when increases in the price of fuel as well as the cost of maintenance and labor brought the city to reconsider and go back to buying wholesale electricity for the city, rather than to generate it themselves.

Councilman, Joe Harlin was elected to be Thayer's Mayor in the fall of 1940 and was in demand to show other nearby towns how to run their own power systems. It was on one such visit to Willow Springs that he had a heart attack. He never recovered and died in December of 1940.

North of the electric plant, was the M. J. Morse Lumber Yard. It had been in business for many years, one of the earliest businesses in the town and formerly owned by the Tabor Brothers. It is still there and in operation. It was bought by Mr. Harold A. Cover in the early nineteen forties and has remained in the Cover family since but of course, has been greatly expanded. The original building and hardware store was the building that is very near where the old power plant stands. The area where Cover's hardware and offices is now located was a series of small houses that faced First Street. The road between the offices and the old original lumber yard was the main road to go to Alton. It crossed the railroad tracks and a bridge over Two-Mile Creek, then turned right, then straight up the hill leading to the old iron bridge over Warm Fork. The road at the railroad has been closed to traffic. Along side that road in 1940 was a gas station and small convenience store run by S. F. (Felix) Taylor. He is a brother to T. Shelt Taylor. The next and last business on the north side of First or Front Street before it interconnects to the highway, old 63, now designated as 19 was in 1940, the Eder Garage and Station. (now Rogers station), After, Ray Eder built the car dealership across the highway from his original garage, the station became known as the D-X station and in the late forties and fifties a café operated there as well but that part of the building is no longer standing.

The 1929 Viaduct over the railroad at the end of First Street, will soon meet it's demise according to the Missouri Department of Transportation. Another landmark from years ago will then be gone. Apparently, it's true, "change is inevitable". The use of First Street by auto should also decrease, after that. That concludes what I can remember about the railroad side of "Front Street."

It might be easier to start once again at the corner of Chestnut and Front Street and follow it in a snapshot taken in 1940 to show what the businesses were at that time on the town side or facing east along Front Street.

In the early days of the town, the rowdiness mostly took place on Front Street. During the day, not so much but at night, the small beer joints came alive. It had already begun to change in nineteen forty, the war seemed to put things at a standstill but shortly there after activity along Front Street, slowly transformed. Young people, especially girls were discouraged by their parents, from hanging out on the northern parts of Front Sreet back in that day. The Sach's owned the corner store earlier in the town's history at Front and Chestnut but their store burned at one point and finally it was taken down and a new store in the nineteen forties went in there on the corner. It was a Piggly-Wiggly Grocery, a chain, started in Memphis back in the nineteen thirties. It was the first grocery or any store for that matter to use shopping carts and to pick your own items from the shelves. The rest of the grocery stores in town gathered the items from the shelf and stacked them on the counter and being a railroad town, many of the people carried an account and bought on a credit. The Piggly Wiggly, however was an all cash store.

The first store facing Front Street north of Chestnut was Garret's grocery. The Garretts were from Alton and operated a store there on the square for many years. They were well liked people and many of the rural people that came to town on Saturday traded there. They propped up the wooden crates with vegetables and fruit along the sidewalk against the building. It was about 1940 when a tent show came to town and they had a parade coming up Front Street. I remember the clown Toby and his mule riding down the sidewalk and stepping on Mr. Garret's produce.

The next business was John Alford's Barber store, where he and Bynum Dunsmore were fixtures as barbers. They had been in that location since the mid-twenties. Ben Nelson, a trainman, was John's first customer and his last when John closed down in the late fifties or early sixties. John was a WWI veteran.

The next entrance to the north was the Royale Theater, operated by the Beck's (Margaret Beck and her son, Johnny along with Johnny's wife Helen) and it was about this time, nineteen thirty-nine or nineteen forty when they relocated to the building up on the northwest corner of Chestnut and Second owned by Dr. Cooper. The theater took a name change, to the Beck Theatre, and it ran continuously for the next forty years.

One of the business places was Charley Robinson's Grocery and it may have been next to where the movies was or it could have been the next-door north, I simply cannot remember.

In 1940, Arthur Duke, operated a Barber shop in the next place north. His place was across from the lawn of the Depot. His dad was a railroad man and Arthur became a barber when he was young. Duke went to the navy for a couple of years in the forties but came home and opened up once a again. His shop was known for the horsehead child barber'chair that sat up high. I got all my haircuts there until I was grown up.

Next, going north was the Irwin Hotel, built in the late 1880s as a replacement to the hotel in the Depot. Originally, ran by Clark Hall, it became the Dreher hotel before Mr. Irwin bought it and ran it for many years and was one of the main places that the north end railroad workers from Springfield that laid over in Thayer used for a lodging and eating place. The Rooney's took it over around 1950 and ran it a number of years.

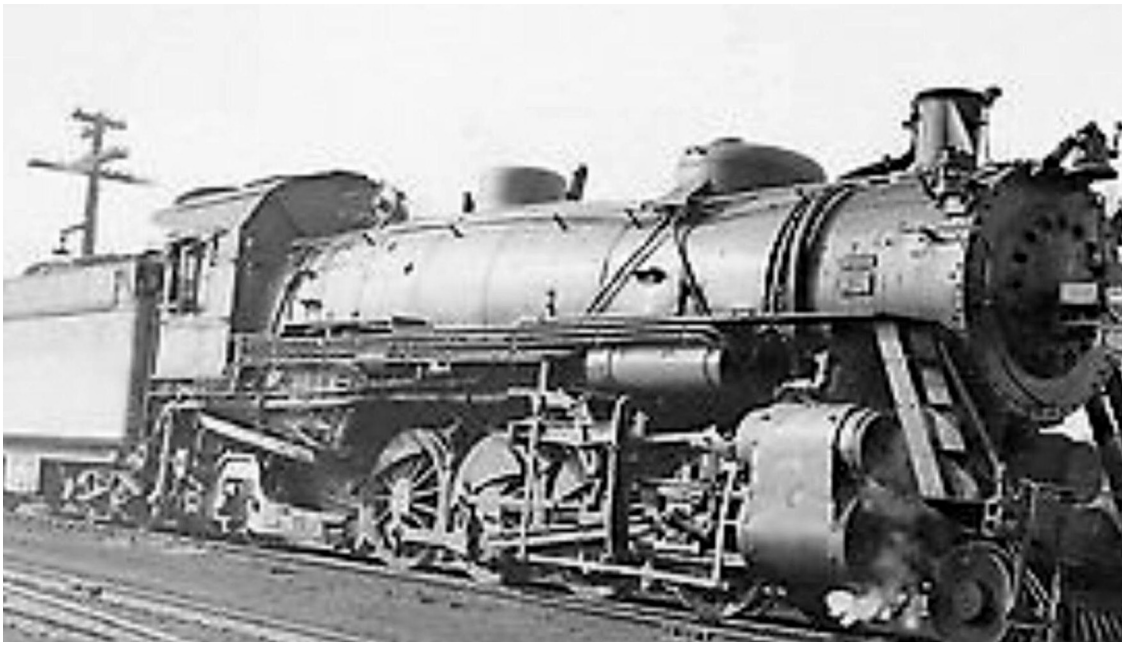
There was a vacant lot between the Irwin Hotel and the Ingle Hotel. Henry Forschler worked and leveled that lot off by hand and hauled the dirt in his pickup truck. There is a building on that lot, now, a barber shop, I believe. The Ingle Hotel, in nineteen forty was ran by the Rethwisch's. Dorothy Phillips Rethwisch inherited the hotel in the thirties from her parents. She married Bill Rethwisch, a bridge construction engineer and they lived in quarters at the hotel. They liked to drive jeeps and fish, left their boat on top of their jeep.

The lot to the north of the Ingle Hotel once held a hotel but in nineteen forty and since it has been vacant.

Across the very steep Market Street to the north is what some people called the Sanders Building. It's a sturdy old white cement building that has housed many businesses. In 1940 it was just being relieved of the Ford Agency and was a place where Mr. Sanders had a trucking business. Orvis Shepherd a couple of years later established a Kaiser-Frazier Auto Dealership in that building. Sears and others have

been in it. Later it was an ambulance garage and dispatch center. Now it houses Toomey's Cargo.

To the north of the white cement building are three small buildings that are ancient in structure and for most of their lives have seen a lot of things and people. If walls could talk, as they say, they could say a lot and most of it would not be something I would want to hear. These three, actually there were four buildings but look like three, were beer joints, cafes with rooms to let. The first building beside or to the north of the old three or four story Sanders building, in 1940 was owned and ran by Clyda Tyree. It was a beer joint on the first floor with rooms on the second floor had had a small balcony on the top floor. In 1947, Clyda traded the business to her sister Agnos Tyree Carrow for a café in St. Louis as Agnos was getting a divorce. Agnos moved into the rooms



and brought her 12 year old son, Jack Carrow to Thayer to live with her.

The next building was Dona (they called her Donee) Tyrees restaurant and rooms. She ran that establishment for many years and never married. During the fifties, it became a place that high school students dropped down the hill to have lunch. The next little beer joint belonged to Homer Bone. His daughter Helen, married Johnny Beck and was J. A., the third's, grandad. That little café was known for its burgers. When Mr. Bone retired, he leased the business to Frank Dills, (Tommy and Gertrude's dad). That was in the late forties and after Frank died, I lost track of who if anyone ran it. At any rate, in the fifties, Harold Burkhead, bought the center building and remodeled it into a barber shop. Harold found an old register in the walls of the building with the bar bills of the patrons of the bar, some forty or so years prior.

So, to the north of Homer Bones place, was a liquor store, and at one time, ran

by Mr. Boze. It was attached to the Campbell Motor Company building. It was a Plymouth – Chrysler dealership, owned and operated by Aubrey Campbell. His dad and brothers operated a car agency in Koshkonong.

To the north of Campbell's Auto was a short dead end street and on the other side of that street to the north was a Barber shop owned by Mike and Herman Eckert. Herman left the shop during the war to go to work on the railroad and after the war, Mike left barbering to take over an RFD postal route. Mike was a fiddle player. Their small shop was remodelled and has become a residence.

Next, there was a small open spot and then the Colonial Hotel. In the 1940s it was still a nice but already older establishment. Lulu Green took it over in the mid nineteen forties and with her long experience at the White Kitchen Café, hosted many dinners in the large dining room in the Colonial and for years hosted the Rotary Club luncheons.

In 1940, a small rock building was put up to the north of the Colonial Hotel, to furnish recap tires. It was owned by Mr. Thompson. In the mid-forties, it caught on fire and made one of the most spectacular fires the town had ever seen. The tire business was not re-established but the building was refurbished and made into a café, commonly known as the bus station. Mrs. Jones ran it for a good while and then in the late nineteen fifties Mrs. Miller, Red's wife took it over and ran for several years while Monroe (Red) operated the station, next door to the north. That station has been there for many years, beginning in the twenties and was known as the Lindsey station and run by John Lindsey.

The open space north of Lindsey's in 1940 was finally turned into a cold storage place that most people referred to as the "Locker Plant." It was built by Franz Foods and initially operated by George Hutchinson. People rented the "lockers" or cold storage bins and stored frozen meat. In the late nineteen forties, Charley Cockman opened what became known as the North End Grocery on that spot after the McMakin Grocery was closed. That building, the last I knew was a Ram Parts Place.

To the north on the corner of First or Front Street and Vine was a station. It had been in operation since the thirties and was ran by the Davis family in the nineteen fifties.

There were two houses but no business places north of Vine on the west side of Front Street in 1940. A tiny one room brick building where the street veers to the left across from the Light and Ice place operated in the thirties as a small grocery but it only ran for a short while. Behind it, Jim Hill put in a small auto repair shop. Two large white apartment houses stood on the hill across from the Power Plant, one of them was owned by Loerwood Davis.

LADIES OF THE NIGHT by Jenny Underwood

The Front Street history would not be complete without telling about the ladies who came to service the train crews who were staying overnight and sometimes sleeping during the days.

These ladies followed in wagons while the railroads were being built cross country. Then when the spots were established for both passengers and crews, they followed.

The term "red light district" is said to have originated with early railroaders. The men carried lit red lanterns when they left the train so in case of an emergency the crew caller would be able to find them. These lanterns were left outside bordellos when crew members stopped to pay the ladies a visit and sometimes were brought inside to be placed in a window.

It was more subtle in Thayer. The alley behind the Front Street and Main Street Hotels were accessible by walking up the road and going down the steps to the second floors of the hotels. The ladies could park their cars on Chestnut Street and wander up wtihout too much notice. Local men took advantage of this service as well. It's not clear what the signs were on who was available during their walks but it created a vibrant industry for women (both married and single) when there was a lack of jobs.

There were several notorious houses in the area. One was in the neighborhood across from Walmart, just outside the city limits. Not only were railroad men customers but on Wednesdays for Sale Barn days, they were quite busy. Another multi-story house was at the end of Front street.

In the 1970's the police were pressured (probably from the wives and churches) to shut down the industry. They rain some of the prostitues out of town and burned the front street building. In western Canada, railway towns became associated with brothels and prostitution, and concerned railway companies started a series of YMCAs in the late nineteenth century in response. It's not clear whether the Thayer YMCA was built as a deterence.

The Dinner Bell cafe would hear the train horn blow as the trains came under the viadoct so breakfast could start. This also notified the prostitutes that another crew was coming into town for the night.

TRAIN CREWS by Max Evans

The Frisco continued to expand and with great fanfare opened a line through Alabama to Pensacola, Florida in 1928.

Railroad unions had taken a strong foothold by the turn of the century and were well established during the time the Frisco operated at Thayer. The railroad train-

men at Thayer were represented by the Brotherhood of Trainmen or BRT. The engine men belonged to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers or BLF&E. Trains were numbered, usually even numbers were used to designate north bound trains and odd numbers designated the southbound trains that traveled through Thayer. At any rate, the crews bid by seniority on which trains they were assigned to operate.

The Thayer crewmen took trains south to Memphis, laid over and returned the following day. A large plywood board was mounted on the wall at the top of the steps in the old depot at Thayer with the numbers of the trains listed on the side. At designated times and by seniority, a trainman could, by placing a tag with their name on it, besides the number of the train, select his job. It was called "bumping", eg. If a conductor wanted to choose a train that another conductor was assigned, they could move their name to that train, providing they had more seniority. The faster "through freights" were sought after jobs because those trains rarely stopped. Others liked to work on the "local" train that returned home each night. Besides the plywood board was a second board called the "extra" board. These names represented the extra workers who furnished fill in's for the "regular" board. (The unions that represent the modern BSNF workers have merged into the United Transportation Union.) The old Depot, in poor repair, was removed in the early nineteen sixties.

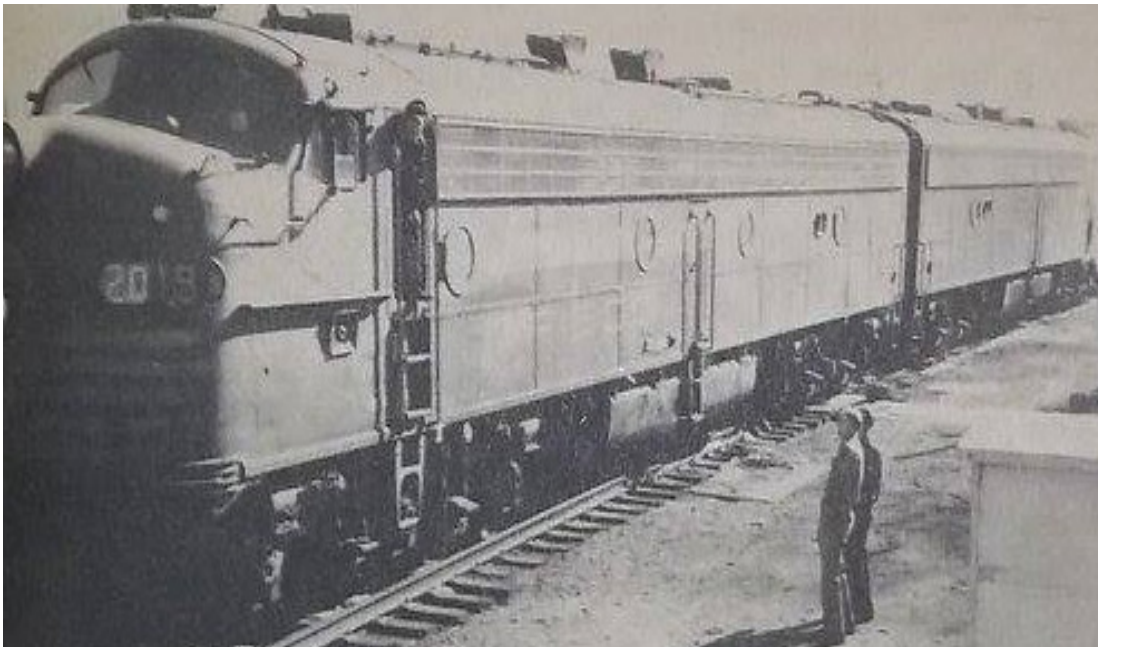
Pocket watches were an important part of the railroader's life and one of the requirements for "hiring out", that is to have an approved watch, among which were the Hamilton, Elgin and Ball makes. The jewelry store at Thayer was certified to calibrate the watches and provided loaners for when the owners left their watches for service. Watches were set by the clock in the depot, or the one at the jewelry store. Town people set their alarm clocks with the noon whistle, blown by the telephone operator, but not the railroaders. They were much more precise.

The railroad workers had a nice benefit with the issuance of passes for family members, which included reciprocal passes on other railroads and many of them took advantage of the opportunity to travel. Back as far as the twenties, going to ball games and Frisco group excursions were popular among the town people. According to the Frisco Employee Magazine, the Frisco baseball club at Memphis sometimes met the Thayer baseball team at Imboden for a day of picnicking and taking in the game before heading back that evening. They sometimes added as many as three extra passenger train cars for the Thayer contingent.

In 1929, before the depression, the Frisco had 880 locomotives, 669 passenger cars and 34,000 freight cars operating on 5,735 miles of mainline track. The twenties were at the apex of the Frisco operations. They had the most equipment and operated over more track than they had before or would in the future. The depression brought on another bankruptcy for the Frisco and true to form the town of Thayer felt it as well. The population dropped to 1,632 in 1930 and no trainmen were added by the Frisco at Thayer in the decade of the thirties.

In March, 1931, the state of Missouri constructed a new "viaduct" (steel

bridge) over the railroad tracks on the north edge of Thayer as a part of the new segment of U. S. Highway 63 was routed around the west side of the town.



The last passenger train through Thayer from Kansas City to Birmingham, AL.

Business and the town were slow to pull out of the depression but things began to improve as 1940 rolled around. The population of Thayer had ticked up to 1,692. During the Roosevelt years, the WPA (Works Progress Administration) had built sidewalks, retaining walls and parks in the town and a new high school was opened in December of 1935 on the site of the original city park.

During WW II the Frisco was extremely busy, especially after some of the east coast ports were closed as a precaution during the war. Troop trains and trains hauling tanks, guns and equipment were a common sight at Thayer. The railroad lost experienced men to the war and had to hire anyone they could find. The railroad workers became very serious about their jobs and the town both benefitted and reeled by the loss of dads, sons, brothers, uncles and others. The Frisco came out of fourteen years of operating in bankruptcy with a re-organization in 1947. Clark Hungerford was elected president.

The Frisco began the conversion to diesel engines in June of 1948. The last train to be pulled by a steam engine took place on February 28, 1952, making the Frisco the first major railroad to become exclusively diesel powered. The new engines had a tremendous impact. The sights, sounds and smells all changed not to mention the steam whistles that often characterized the trains.

THE DEMISE OF PASSENGER TRAINS

As automobiles became the transportation of choice the railroad passenger trains suffered a loss in business. The railroads tried everything to retain ridership but finally threw in the towel, except for the commuter rails in the northeast. The Frisco restructured their passenger service on September 17, 1965 by pulling several passenger trains from service. Trains numbered 105-106 " The Kansas City – Florida Special" and 107-108 "The Sunnyland" which ran through Thayer, were taken out of service. A new downgraded train numbered 101-102 and called "The Southland", began running the next day on September 18.

The "Southland" was the last passenger train to operate through Thayer with its run on December 8, 1967. Thayer railroad men, Clarence Edwards, engineer and Don Springfield, a fireman operated this last run from Memphis. At that time, 101 left Kansas City at 9:40 A. M. and arrived in Springfield at 2:00 PM, departed Springfield at 2:45 P. M. and arrived at Thayer at 5:50 P. M. and left Thayer at 6:00 and with stops at Memphis, and Amory, Mississippi would arrive at Birmingham at 6:15 A. M. the next morning. This was considerably slower than the passenger trains some twenty-five to thirty years earlier.

U.S.MAIL

The demise of the passenger trains had a huge impact on the U. S. Mail. The efficiency developed on the rails was difficult to exceed. There were two U. S. mail receptacle boxes mounted by the fence, one on the north edge of the depot and one on the south for southbound mail. Letters were collected from the boxes in canvas bags and pitched up into the U. S. Mail Service cars during the train stops to be sorted on the fly. The men in the mail cars were official mail clerks and some were armed as many pieces of mail contained cash. It may be hard to believe, but a mail order to either Sears & Roebuck in Memphis or to Montgomery Ward in Kansas City could possibly be delivered that same day and merchandise from the catalog the next day. The same held true with letters addressed to places along the rail lines. It was a very efficient system and at 3 cents per stamp and 1 cent for a pre-stamped postcard, an affordable one as well.

TRANSPORTING LIVESTOCK

Trucks took over the transportation of livestock from the railroad, especially during the fifties and sixties. At Thayer, a set of pens located just north of the Standard Oil distribution terminal were used to unload cattle and horses from trains for water and feeding. Horse traders often used the pens for trading as well as local livestock that were brought or driven to the pens for shipment to the packing plants.

Business on the Frisco, slowed considerably in the depression years of the thirties and no new employees were hired. The business was brisk during the war and several trainmen were hired in the forties but not many in the fifties until replacements for retiring workers began to take place. More hiring was done in the sixties and seventies. Beginning in the eighties and continuing, coal hauling to power plants in the south has increased train traffic through Thayer. In later years, as many as 30 coal trains a day have been brought through Thayer but it has not impacted the town as much because the railroad has won concessions and the full crew laws in Arkansas have been eliminated, dissipating from six to two operators, an engineer and conductor, on each train. The dynamics and the economy of the town has trended away from local spending which was very much coveted in earlier years.

SHOPPING FOR A RAILROAD CAP IN THAYER

by Bill F. Combs

"I ain't for sure if these caps were called railroad caps or not but that's what we called them. My Daddy and I rode the back of the milk truck to Thayer with other people for the charge of a dime. When we got to Thayer, he would let everyone off at the bottom of the hill. You had one hour to be back or you would be left there.

Most people would head halfway up the hill to what I think was Olds Brothers Clothing store.

Now I ain't' for sure ifn' I am thinking of the right way that store looked on the inside, but seems I can remember a wide stairway coming down in the middle with a loft of clothes over the back half of the store. Anyhow, it didn't take long to buy a pair of dress pants in those days. All a person had to do was buy a pair that fit the waist. You didn't have to worry about the leg size because they were all long and the women would hem them up to fit the leg size at home. Anyways, I really never figured out why men needed a pair of those, what they called dress slacks. The proper dress for church or a funeral was a new pair of bib overhauls and a white shirt.

Well, let me back up on that for jest a minute. Ifn' it was a wealthy business person that lived in town, you might see dress pants as they called them. I would guess a person might not have them on over one or two times a year. A man could not outgrow them because mom would keep what was cut off from the leg in case the waist got too little. They could be made larger later with the extra cloth.

One other reason for us going to Thayer that day was for me to see a train up close. My Daddy had told me about how he used to hop them to ride over in Arkansas to pick cotton. He had learned from the Hoboes how to hop the trains. Ifn' you didn't know how, you better not try it, because it was an easy way to kill yourself. Dad finished fast, and we walked back down the hill and walked over to where the trains were.

There it was a big engine with a man setting in it. My Dad waved at him, and he comes over, and Dad asked him if I could touch the train. The man seemed to know my Dad, but I don't reckon he did, because we were a long way from Alton. As we crossed one set of tracks my attention turned to something else that I had seen before, but didn't really connect it to the railroad.

I touched the wheels and the big piece of iron, but still my eyes stayed on the caps that all the railroad men were wearing. Now some had on different type caps, but this was the workers cap that I was looking at. The man took the cap off his head and put it on my head. It was very stiff and come down over my eyes. Somehow we came away with a couple of those caps that I had seen before but my Dad didn't wear them. Men wore them in the late twenty-year-old to middle thirty-year-olds."

THE 1960'S AND BEYOND

The Highway 63 bypass was constructed diverting traffic to the highway and spelled doom for the Shangri-lah Motel built by Paul and Valerie Hayes and Talley Ho Motel built by Doc and Dorothy Ellis on old 63. A Walmart store on the other side of Highway 63 and drew shoppers and businesses away from downtown. New businesses were built close to Wal-Mart rather than downtown.

The Front and Chestnut Street Hotels started to close after the passenger trains stopped running in 1966. The Ingle Hotel closed in 1972 as a hotel but the building was preserved through the years.

MAMMOTH SPRING HOTELS AND BUSINESSES

With Mammoth Spring easily accessible by train, businesses marketed the town as an ideal summer getaway. Napoleon Hill was a banker and industrialist from Memphis who saw the potential of investing in Mammoth Spring. He funded the building of the Nettleton Hotel which was completed in 1899. Run by the Nettleton family, the Hotel had a stunning view overlooking the Spring River and provided upscale accommodations. The building was destroyed by fire November 30, 1932 but while there it operated alongside two other rival family hotels: the Culp Hotel and the Charlton Hotel. The Nettleton Hotel was a beautiful Victorian style building with yellow siding, red roofing, white trim, and two large porches on the front and back of the house. A fountain decorated the front lawn with a swing next to it. The Nettleton hosted conferences, newspaper conventions, balls, parties, and guests for the Blue & Gray Reunion of Civil War veterans. It was a popular gathering point for the town and tourists alike. http://archives.arkansas.gov/!userfiles/pdfs/Octoberr%202014%20final.pdf

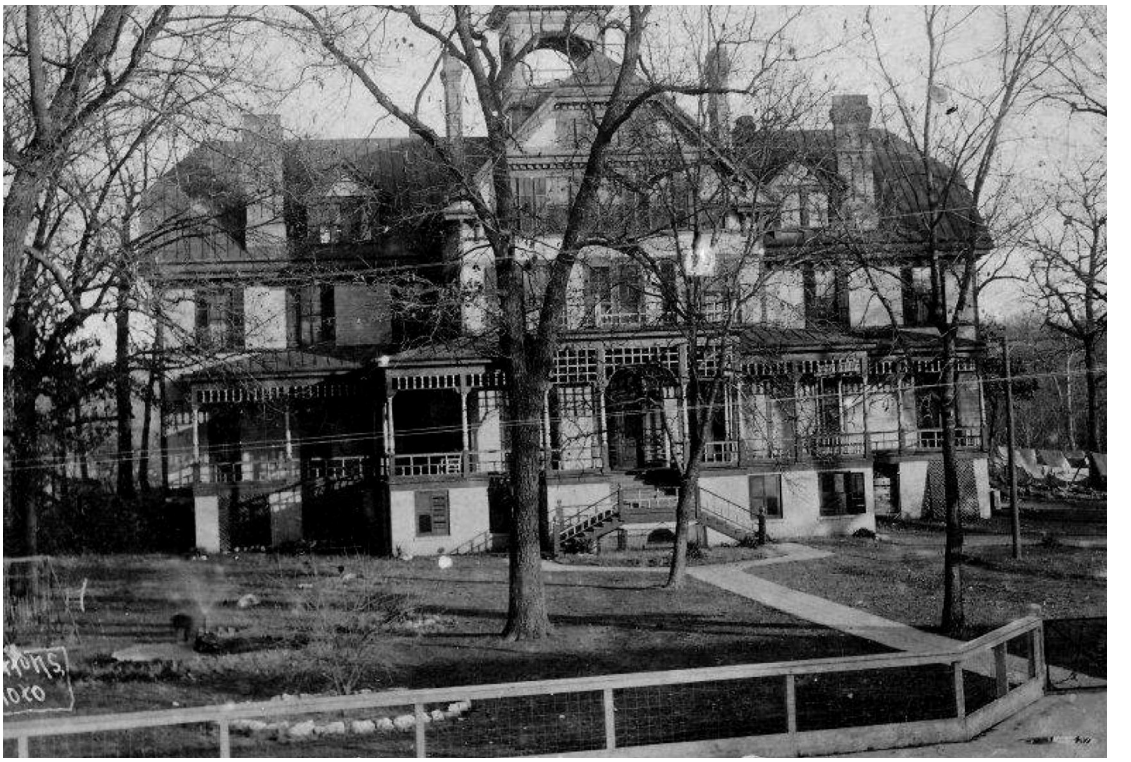
On May 28, 1920, the Mammoth Spring Democrat reported on the Nettleton Hotel, "It is the best equipped and most thoroughly modern hotel to be found outside the large city. It has sixty large, breezy, well furnished rooms with both hot and cold water from the Mammoth Spring in every room, with a great open-air dancing pavilion adjoining, and boats on the spring river, built especially for the enjoyment of guests. Mr. Fred Lawrence, the manager of the Nettleton Hotel, has perfected arrangements with the traffic department of the Frisco railway by which a special low-price summer rate

from Memphis to Mammoth Spring and return, with a 15-day limit, will be installed June 1 and run to September 30, the price of ticket--round trip--being only $9.17, and no doubt this will bring to us hundreds of visitors during those four summer months. When they come they will find a model little town affording 1921 conveniences in banking, merchandising, etc. and some of the finest people yet born, a people who will never grow tired at helping to make you comfortable, contented and happy."

The Mammoth Spring Improvement and Water Power Company, headed by Napoleon Hill, invested $200,000 in the construction of a dam, flour mill, and cotton mill. The Mammoth Spring Dam was completed in 1888 and hydro-powered Mammoth Spring.

Spring Roller Mill and Elevator ground soft wheat into flour with the Mammoth Spring Cotton Mill and Cotton Gin (roller mill & cotton mill completed about 1889). The dam created a 16-acre water reservoir called Spring Lake, and water from Mammoth Spring constantly ran over the top of the dam.

It gave rise to a power plant, milling company, and shoe factory which boosted the new railroad. The Mammoth Spring Milling Company, built in 1891, shipped up to 400 barrels of flour daily by train. Calumet Cotton Factory was the major employer in 1889 and was described "as a 2-story brick textile mill with 120 looms, 5000 spindles, and 150 employees."

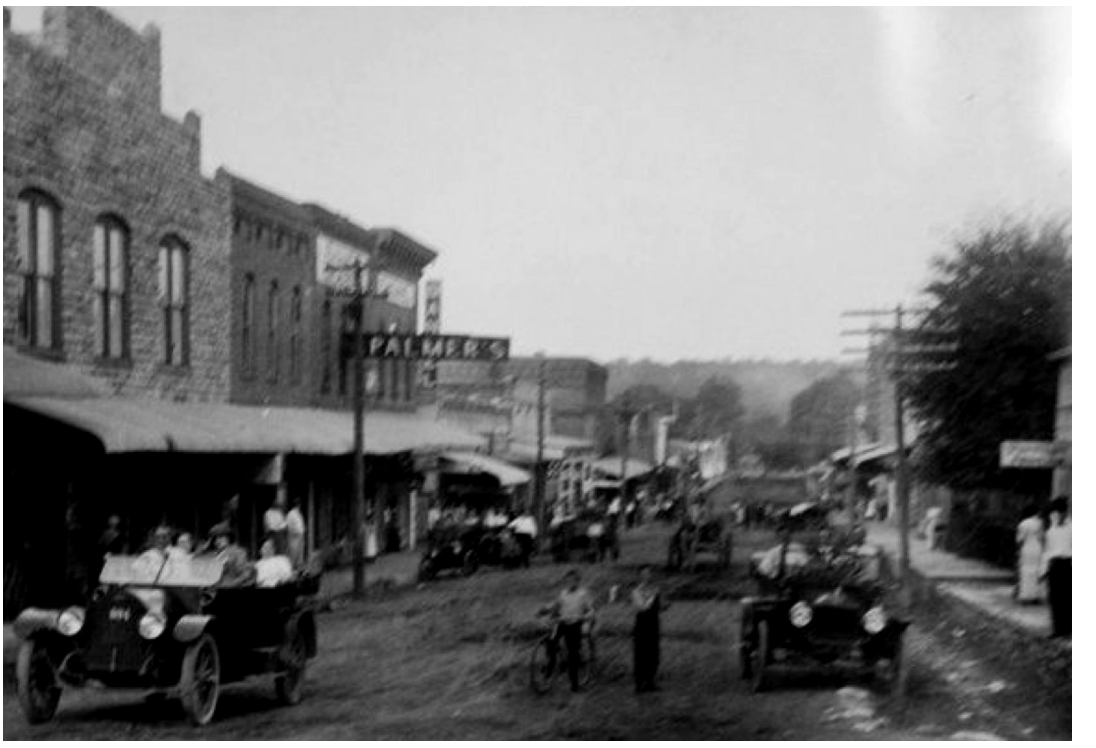


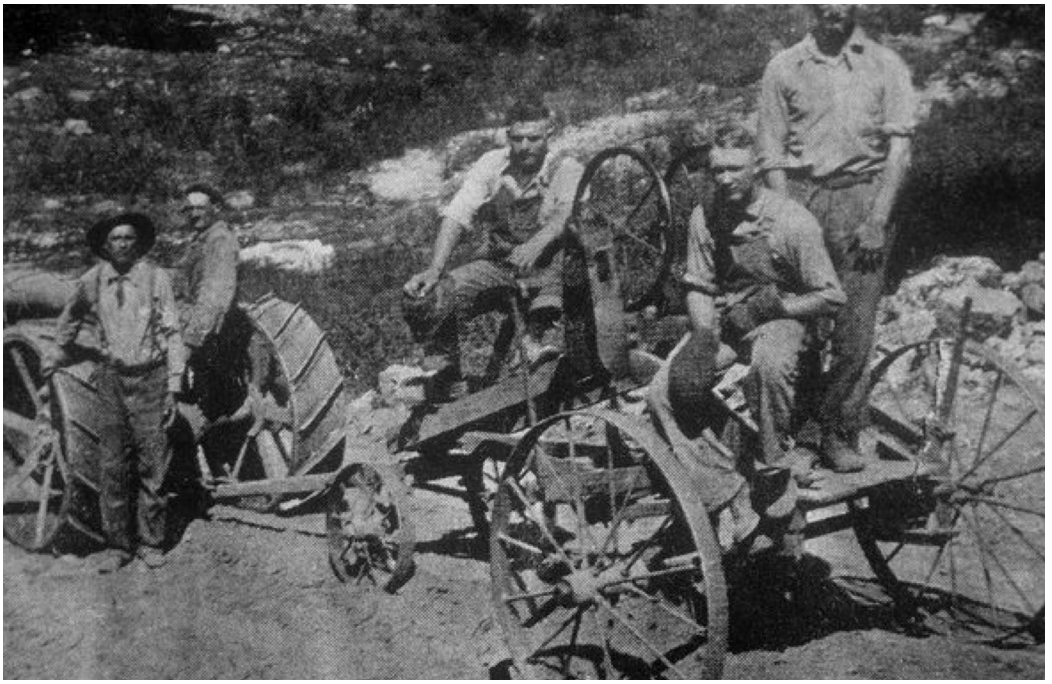
The Culp Hotel

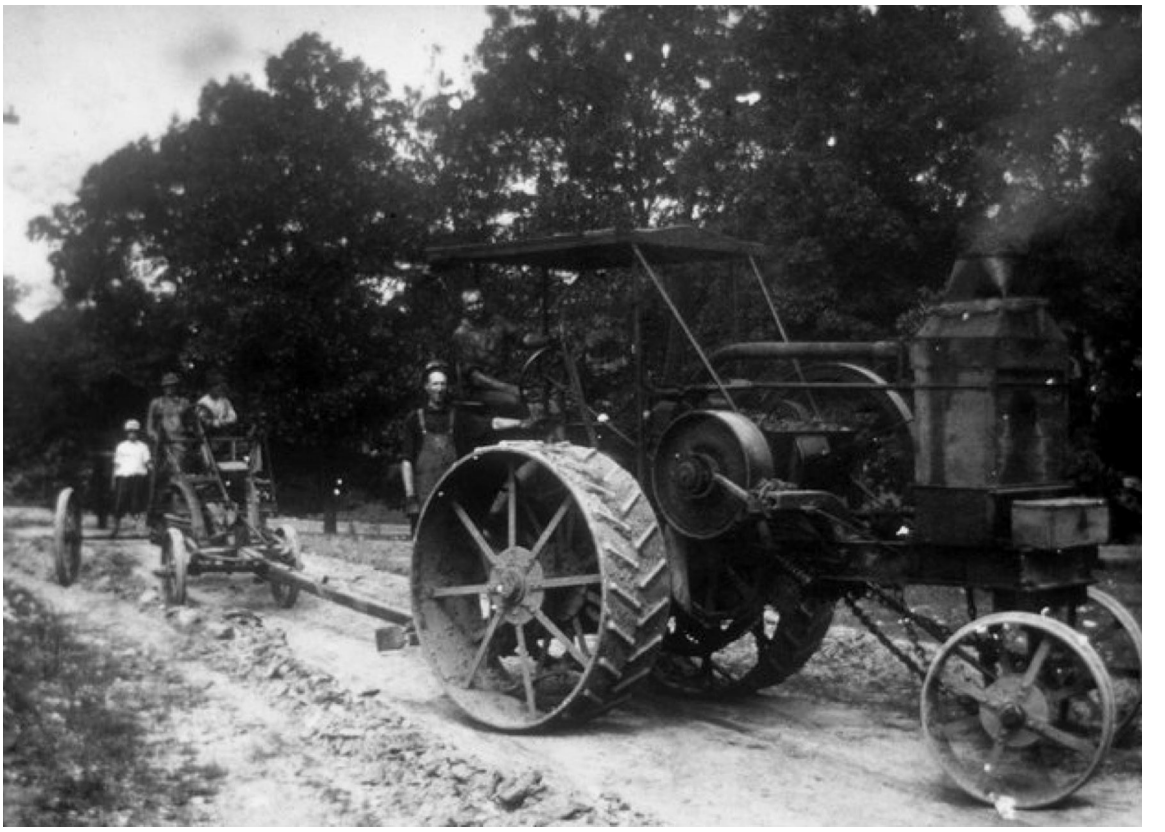
The area had built telephone and electric service by 1900, powered by the hydro-electric power from Dam 1, Dam 2 and Dam 3 on Spring River.

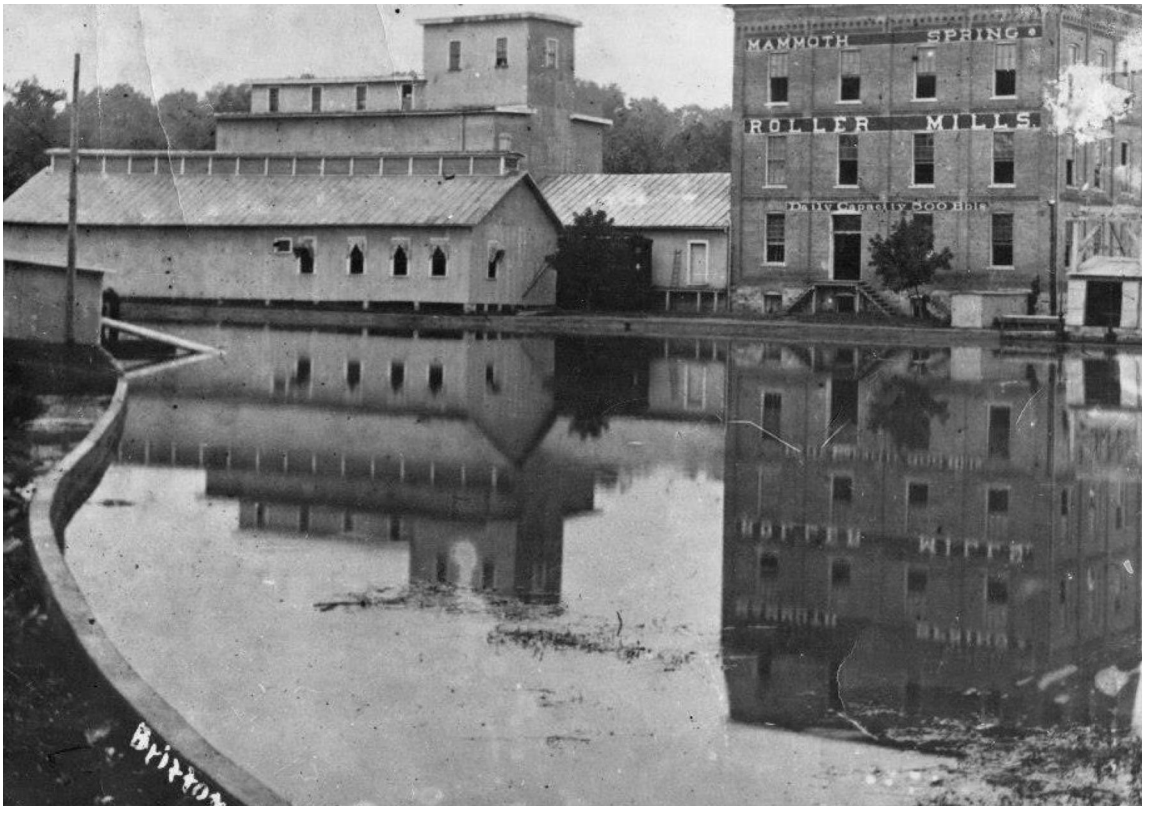
CULP HOTEL
"Not the Biggest Just the Best"
ON THE BANK OF THE SPRING RIVER
Every attention given to guests
Sample Rooms In Connection
Dr. and Mrs. C. W. CULP
1924 newspaper advertisement

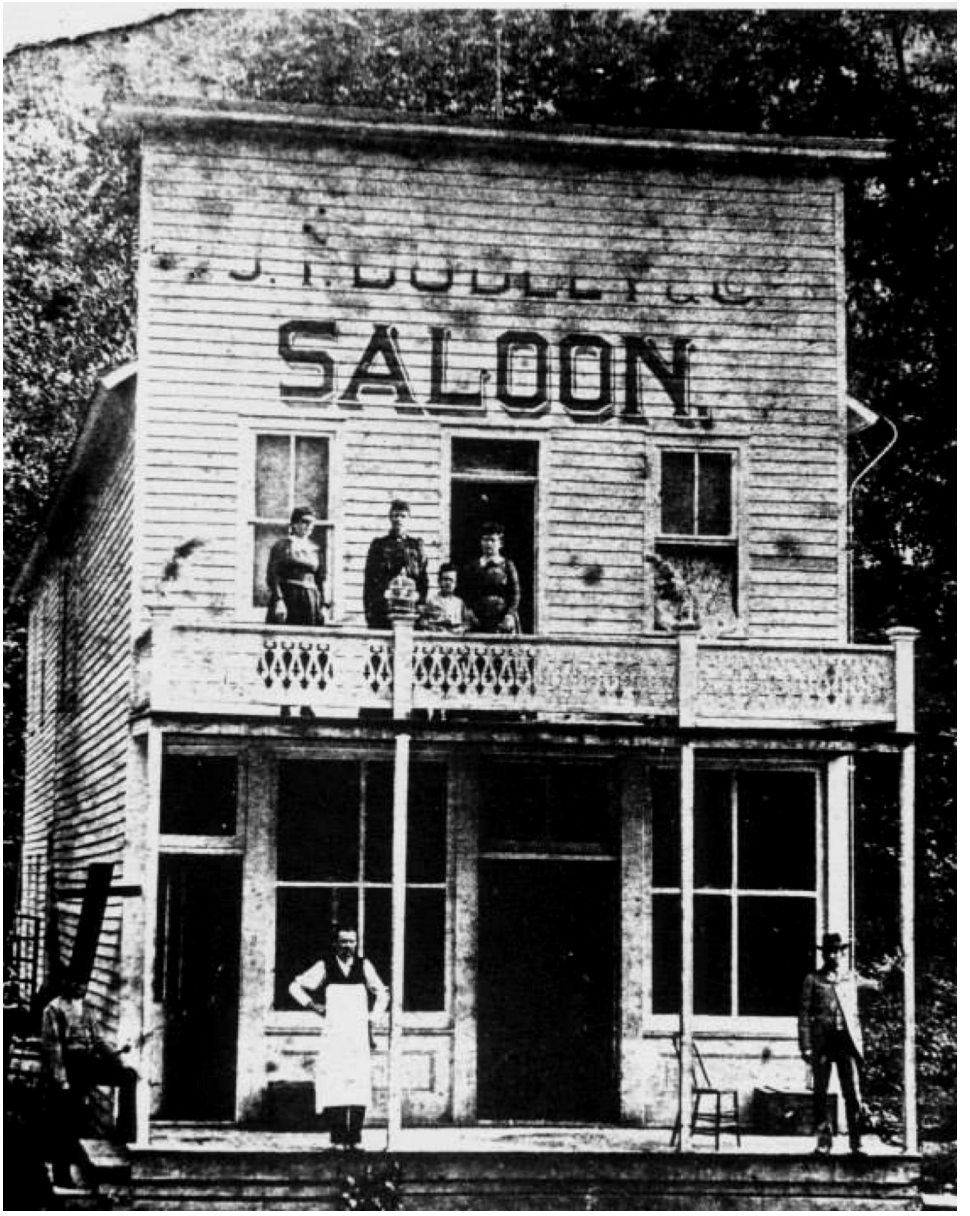
Mammoth Spring was heavily involved in building railroad ties and tracks.


PALMER'S






MAMMOTH SPRING
ROLLER MILLS
Daily Capacity 300 Bbls



COLORFUL CRIMES OF THE PAST

OUTLAWS

CIVIL WAR OUTLAWS

The Civil War violence divided Oregon County into North and South with both Armies sending troops to attack. It is said that both Northern and Southern armies thought Oregon County residents belonged to the other side. Settlers were attacked from both sides and had to prove themselves to be recruited into either army. They even had to move the Oregon County Courthouse records to a cave, showing a small boy where to find them later in case they were all killed.

Especially heinous were the outlaws who would hide out in the Wilderness area and dress as Northern or Southern families, steal horses and supplies, and commit murder and mayhem. Mike Crawford in his book Oregon County, Missouri: The Wilderness Today and Yesterday tells the story of Father Hogan and his approximately sixty flocks of Irish immigrants to start a new life in the Wilderness. Unfortunately, they settled near where the outlaws would camp and near a road that was a major route for both northern and southern soldiers. The attacks to the community decimated the community. The few survivors were escorted to Gatewood, Mo where a church monument to them has been erected.

A famous fighter for the south called "Devil Dick" Boze which Boze Mill is named after is said to have maimed and killed many residents.

Then along came Larkin Allen from Myatt, MO, and a Northern sympathizer. who shot "Devil Dick" in the back of the head. Lou Wehmer, a Civil War Historian, wrote:

"Times were tough during and after the Civil War and much of the turmoil in Howell and Oregon counties stemmed from horse thievery along the Missouri-Arkansas border which could be spirited either north or south for resale...Larkin Allen was arrested by a Union patrol out of Rolla in 1863 on charges of horse stealing, but was let go after three months as the Union officials were not too concerned with the theft of horses."

Lewis Simpson's book "Oregon County: Six County Seats," wrote that when troops would come into farms left to be run by women, they found the women were even more ferocious than the men and warned soldiers to take great care when stealing from them. The women would hide supplies and lie about what they had. One story told of a soldier trying to get a woman to do his laundry and instead she destroyed all of his socks.

HANGINGS

Hangings were memorialized by large gatherings of people to watch. There was a tree called the hanging tree out old Hwy 142 and is still used for directions to go the back way from Missouri to Arkansas.

THE FIRST HANGING. THAT TOOK PLACE IN OREGON COUNTY —AN ACCOUNT OF IT NOW FIRST PUBLISHED

CIRCUIT COURT —1856. The State of Mo., vs. Robert Shehane. The murder of Terrel Harrison. [Oregon Co. Circuit Court Records]

In the year 1857, or thereabouts, there is some difference of opinion as to the exact date, Robert Shehan was hanged at Thomasville, this County, for murder. The crime which he expiated with his life, was committed in Ripley County, between Doniphan and the present site of the Boze Mill, not far from the Oregon County

line, at a settlement called Forcia de Mael. The settlement still bears the name of Forcia; we are told.

Boze Mill

At a horse race in this settlement in 1853, Shehan, who was a violent and reckless character, got into a dispute with a man named Upton and killed him with a knife. He was arrested at once and taken to Thomasville, which was then the county seat of Oregon County, and lodged in jail. Later his case was brought to this county on a change of venue. On one pretext and another, his trial was delayed from year to year until 1857. John R. Woodside at that time attorney for the 14th judicial circuit conducted the prosecution, which resulted in a conviction of murder in the first degree.

Shehan was sentenced to hang; the day was set for the execution and crowds were gathering to witness the spectacle when word came that he had been allowed a respite by Gov. Trusten Polk. A delay of some months followed and again the day of execution dawned; this time, there was no respite. Rude gallows were erected, consisting of a post in the ground, a stout cross beam about 14 feet from the earth, with a ring at the end through which to pass the rope. The gallows stood just south of Thomasville, on the flat sandy bottom on the south bank of Eleven points river.

As hangings in those days were public a vast crowd, running into the thousands, assembled to witness the awful spectacle. In the crowd were most of the citizens who are

now numbered among the pioneer settlers of the county, and from whom these details were gleaned. Three of Thayer's respected citizens are among them. J.P. Woodside, W.L. Hearle, and Jesse Huddleston were boyish spectators, and vividly recall the great excitement that prevailed. The prisoner was brought to the gallows in a wagon, seated upon his coffin. He was accompanied by the sheriff, Wm. Griffith; also by John Carr and Wm. Humphreys, who at his request played the death march upon their violins.

Shehan entered into the picnic spirit of the occasion with great gusto, and when the wagon stopped under the gallows, and the noose had been adjusted, stopped the proceedings to call for another drink of whiskey. The sheriff wishing to grant the last wish of his prisoner sent back to town for a pint bottle. When this was finally given him, he mounted the coffin, with the noose around his neck, drank the liquor down and shouted, "I give and bequeath my body and soul to Dr. Griffith!" He reeled on the coffin; the noose was drawn, the lash was applied, and the horses dashed away, launching the murderer to his doom.

Women screamed and fainted, and men bowed their heads to shut out the awful sight. Such is the story of the first and to this date the only, execution in the history of Oregon County, the details of which are for the first time now put into print.

SWUNG INTO ETERNITY - Carrol Rice Pays the Penalty of His Awful Crime

WITNESSED BY THOUSANDS

The Oregon County times Newspaper June 18th, 1899 (on microfiche at the Alton Library)

The Prisoner Longed for Freedom Once, but Died Game...A History of the Crime and the Story of His Wild and Troubled Life.

Carol Rice, the wife murderer paid the penalty of his awful crime with his life at Alton yesterday. The noose was adjusted and the trap was sprung about 12:50. At 12:58 the subject was pronounced dead, and at 1:06 a period of 16 minutes, the body was cut down.

The spectacle was witnessed by a crowd of near 3,000 people, who form the lay of the ground could see over the walls of the stockade and observe all that took place upon the scaffold. The execution was conducted with perfect care, and everything passed off without the slightest hitch.

A prayer brought many to tears. Sheriff Deatheridge of Shannon county and Deputy Sheriff Geo. Clark, W. W. McLeland and C. B Davis assisted Sheriff Taylor in preparing the prisoner for execution. He stood erect and calm before the crowd.

But when the sheriff began to tie his lands, he said in a low voice. "You ain't goin' to hang me, are you?"

There was a picnic spirit on the occasion with great gusto, and when the wagon stopped under the gallows, and the noose had been adjusted, the prisoner called for another drink of whiskey. The sheriff wishing to grant the last wish of his prisoner sent back to town for a pint bottle. When this was finally given him he mounted the coffin, with the noose about his neck, drank the liquor down and shouted, "I give and bequeath my body and soul to Dr. Griffith!"

He reeled on the coffin, the noose was drawn, the lash was applied and the horses dashed away, launching the murdered to his doom. Women screamed and fainted, and men bowed their heads to shut out the awful sight.

The crime which Carroll Rice committed is still fresh in the minds of Oregon County citizens. Upon the 27th of June, 1898, a little less than a year ago, Rice fired upon his wife with a Winchester rifle, killing her almost instantly. She had left him a few weeks before and taken up her abode with an old lady living near Boze Mill, known as Grandma Conner. Rice had made several ineffectual efforts to induce her to live with him. On the night before the killing, he went to the Connor house armed with his Winchester and concealed himself nearby, "waylaid the house" as he afterward termed it. He stayed there in the hope of seeing her until the occupants of the houses retired; then he went to a hollow near the spring below the house and waited there till morning. Then he went to the milking lot and awaited her there. Failing to see her there he returned to the spring and waited until she appeared in the company with a young Mrs. Connor. He approached and asked her to go home with him. She refused to talk at first but finally agreed to go if she could just get her clothes which were in the house. She stooped to pick up the bucket of water and pass on. Then when she turned around, he shot her dead.

He said later he wasn't sorry for the shooting. He said he missed an old hound dog more than he missed her. He had many visitors to the jail and he talked to them all.

SPRING CITY RAID ON DISTILLERY

On Friday morning last Circuit Judge W.N. Evans met the prosecuting attorney of Oregon county who is doing his duty by appointment at Thayer and personally conducted raid was made on the establishment of T.V. Marshall who ostensibly conducts a small distillery at Spring city, between Thayer and Mammoth Spring, Ark.

An Oregon County Deputy Sheriff was pressed into service and warned that no telephone message "tipping off" the raid would be tolerated. A bystander, whose

sympathies are said to be with the saloon element, was deputized against his will be the judge and the four proceeded to Spring city where the raid was made. T. V. Marshall and a son were placed under arrest and charged with violating the local option law. Some twenty visitors who were drinking at the distillery were held as witnesses. A large quantity of beer stored in a stone warehouse nearby was discovered through the talkativeness of an old colored woman, and it was seized as belonging to Marshall. There was also quite a lot of liquor of various kinds seized at the distillery.

Marshall is said to openly and flagrantly violated the law since it became operative and has boasted that he would show Judge Evans a few tricks that he didn't know if he bothered with his business in Oregon County. There are enough cases against Marshall to keep him in prison for the rest of his natural life if convicted.

Another arrest was also made the same day of a man who is charged with: "boot-legging" around Thayer.

Spring City has been for years a hangout for thugs and dissolute characters and it has been a thorn in the side of the decent people in Thayer and Mammoth Spring, catering as it has to the vicious element in both places.

The distillery is located but a short distance from the old, "Line Saloon" in which Com Bostic, a bartender, killed Deputy Sheriff Devine, of Fulton county, MO., in a drunken brawl several years ago and whose trial occurred in West Plains.

It is reported here on Monday that Marshall is said to have taken part of the stock seized in the raid while it was supposed to be in the custody of an officer of the law. It was also stated that the distillery is still doing business in violation of the law. A crap game was in progress last Sunday at the state line, and when molested the players would simply step from one state into another. It is said that more than a dozen drunken men were lying about.

COCK FIGHT

Largest Cockfight Ever in Mo. Raided in Oregon County

One of the largest cockfighting raids ever in Missouri took place Saturday afternoon, February 27, at an Oregon County farm near Winona, Missouri, just south of the Shannon County line. The 320-acre farm is owned by Albert Conner and is surrounded by the Mark Twain National Forest.

According to reports, 149 people were arrested on misdemeanor charges of violating the state's statute prohibiting cock-fighting and 1118 roosters seized, twelve of them already dead from fighting. The misdemeanor charge carries a maximum penalty of one year in jail and/or a $1,000 fine.

Forty-three out-of-state residents either posted a bond or plead guilty and paid a $300 fine and court costs after being brought to the Oregon County Courthouse, according to Oregon County Deputy Virgil Mullaney.

As of Monday, Oregon County Sheriff Junior Henry said that Conner was the only man arrested who was identified as an Oregon County resident but is free on $1,000 property bond.

Before officers began the raid, two undercover officers were sent to observe the operation and witnessed one fight before other officers arrived. Some 50 law enforcement officers from Howell, Shannon and Oregon Counties, along with the Highway Patrol, members of the Howell County Sheriff's and West Plains Police Reserve Units and West Plains Policemen participated in the raid. The two undercover agents from the Humane Society of Missouri in St. Louis provided information on the cockfights and assisted officers in the raid.

While some were obtaining names, others searched the area for evidence, confiscating a set of scales and to weigh the roosters, 20 to 30 pairs of razor-sharp fighting spurs. $135 from concessions which were sold at the fight, $158 apparently used for betting purposes and two trophies.

Oregon County Sheriff Junior Henry said drugs used to make the roosters fight were also confiscated and have been sent to the highway patrol for laboratory testing. One person was charged with felony possession of a controlled substance and a small amount of marijuana was found on another.

Evidently, the fights have been occurring monthly but officials are not sure exactly how long the events have been taking place. According to Deputy Mullaney, the roosters were taken to St. Louis to the Humane Society shelter until they are no longer needed for evidence. Sue Weimer, Human Society attendant, said the roosters will eventually be destroyed in case they are only good for fighting.

THE FAMOUS OUTLAWS

THE JAMES-YOUNGER BROTHERS GANG

Members of the James-Younger brothers were purported to have visited Oregon County, perhaps more than once. The stories go that the area was perhaps a hideout for the James brothers. The Younger gang was rumored to have burned down the Alton Courthouse. The Younger boys were issued warrants because they burned down the Oregon County Courthouse but were never apprehended.

SOUTH MISSOURIAN DEMOCRAT, March 30, 1916 reported **COLE YOUNGER DEAD** so there was local interest.

Cole Younger, famous outlaw of border days, but of late years a devout

church attendant and a model citizen, died at his home at Lee's Summit, Mo., March 21, 1916. He was 72 years old and unmarried. This is the last member of the James-Quantrill gang.

Stories about Jesse and Frank coming through and temporarily staying in Oregon County have been part of our history and culture.

One story says that Granny Blue used to hide them in her barn. She would leave breakfast out on the table and go about her work. When she came in, there would be a gold piece underneath the plate from the James gang.

Another story tells of a woman who shielded Jesse James from being arrested under her skirts while standing at the sink in the kitchen. She denied seeing him to the Sheriff who came to investigate.

My grandmother's father, Mr. Sam Lindley, fought in the Civil War and was thought to be a member of one of the Bushwacker gangs that operated. He left home a boy of 16 and came home with a bag of gold, enough to buy a farm near Jonesboro, Arkansas.

One day, a man in a wagon approached the house on the driveway. My great-grandfather met the wagon and told the man he could not come into visit. The man was Frank James who had hired a wagon specifically to visit the farm. He must have known my great-grandfather well.

Larry Foreschler's great grandfather Adams was a tailor and sewed a suit for Frank James. So they must have been here long enough to get a suit made.

It has been told that the James gang used the old Pocahontas Road that goes through the Wilderness for traveling. More is written about the area in The Oregon County History books, Oregon County, Missouri: The Wilderness Today and Yesterday by Mike Crawford and stories of the Guerilla gangs in the book Historical Sketches of the Warm Fork Hill Country by Joe Senn, Dorys Ward, and illustrated by Anita Caldwell.

JAMES YOUNGER GANG

The James-Younger Gang was notorious in the latter part of the 1860's. It was located in Missouri. Most of their unlawfulness centered on robberies. The gang consisted of the James brothers, Jesse James and his older brother Alexander Franklin "Frank" James. Sometimes the Younger brothers, Jim, John, Bob and Cole Younger would join the gang temporarily. Other members would be part of the gang at one time or another. These included John Jarrette who was Jesse James' brother-in-law, Clel Miller, Arthur McCoy, Matthew Nelson, Charlie Pitts, and Bill Chadwell.

This notorious gang was the outgrowth of men who had known each other as bushwhackers of the Civil War. When the war was over, these were among the men who seemed not to fit into society any longer. They took to robbing banks to support themselves. While they were not very organized at first, some of them drifting together

by chance, they soon became a gang that had grown and learned from their mistakes.

While the gang was in Northfield, Minnesota, a Swedish immigrant farmer was killed by a bullet as the gang was trying to rob the bank. The assistant cashier inside the bank would not open the vault for the gang and was shot for his refusal. All the gang got from their robbery attempt was a bag full of nickels. After this failure, they decided to go their separate ways to elude the police.

Eventually, a gun battle ensued between the James Gang and the police. One bullet killed Pitts and others caught the Younger brothers but not killing them. Eventually, the Younger brothers were sentenced to life in prison. Jesse James was killed by one of his own gang members per his legend.

THE JAMES-YOUNGER GANG AND THEIR CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

By William Preston Mangum II

During their outlaw careers, the James brothers and the Younger brothers dealt in fine-blooded stock, raced thoroughbreds and rode beautiful American Saddlebreds. All were expert horsemen, always paying careful attention to their animals, which were essential tools of their 'business.' Also essential to the West's most famous outlaw brothers' success was the support of a circle of trusted friends. Included in those supporters were such prominent and influential families as the Hudspeths, who raised stock and bred horses on their vast landholdings in Jackson County, Missouri. Among the most outspoken was Virginia-born newspaper editor John Newman Edwards, who had been Confederate General Joseph O. Shelby's adjutant during the Civil War. Edwards' printed words provided alibis and excuses for the James-Younger Gang, which was seen by him and many other Southerners as a collection of well-liked former guerrillas forced into living outside the law by a repressive Republican Reconstruction federal government.

After the Civil War, other ex-guerrillas — who had ridden with the notorious William Quantrill and 'Bloody Bill' Anderson — were as well known as the Jameses and Youngers. Some were recruited as gang members. From February 13, 1866, through the September 7, 1876, Northfield raid in Minnesota, the James-Younger Gang reportedly robbed 12 banks, five trains, five stagecoaches and the gate cash box of the ticket booth at the Kansas City Exposition. A network of friends showed sympathy and support for Frank and Jesse even after the famous fiasco at Northfield. Others, though, turned against the boys — not only those people who could no longer see them simply as 'victims' of Northern aggression and big business, but also personal acquaintances and even some new gang members.

BARKER GANG AND THE MURDER OF SHERIFF ROY KELLY

Landlords nowadays often require folks wishing to rent a house or apartment to fill out applications so they can do background checks on the applicants before letting strangers move onto their property. Such was not the case in 1931 when an older couple, giving their names as Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Dunlop, showed up at Thayer, Missouri, about October 12 of that year and rented a farmhouse from Wellington McClel-

land in an out-of-the-way area about two miles east of town. The free-spending Dunlop, who let it be known that he was a retired farmer who'd made his money from oil lands in Oklahoma, just plunked down the cash and moved in. A day or two later, two young men, whom Dunlop introduced as his son and nephew, moved in with the couple. In an era before instant background checks, McClelland had no way of knowing that "Mrs. Dunlop" was actually Arizona Kate "Ma" Barker, that one of the young men was her murderous son Fred, and that the other was the notorious Alvin Karpis.

Over the next few weeks, Karpis and Fred Barker pulled off a string of crimes in the area, including the burglary of McCallon's clothing store in West Plains on Thursday night, December 17.

On Saturday morning the 19th, Karpis pulled his 1931 blue De Soto into Davidson's garage in West Plains to have two flat tires repaired, with Fred Barker riding shotgun. The car matched the description of a vehicle seen near McCallon's store on the night of the burglary, and garage owner Carac Davidson immediately relayed his suspicions to Howell County sheriff C.R. "Roy" Kelly. Still seated in the car when the sheriff showed up to investigate, Barker and Karpis immediately gunned the lawman down when he walked up to the driver's side door of the De Soto. Accounts of the murder differ, but the best evidence suggests that Barker opened fire first with a .45 caliber automatic pistol and fired the fatal shots. He then jumped out of the vehicle and ran around to the other side to continue shooting as Kelly fell, while Karpis chimed in with a .38 caliber revolver.

After the shooting, Karpis roared out of the garage in the De Soto, and Barker escaped on foot through the streets of West Plains. Bloodhounds were put on Barker's trail but to no avail. The De Soto was found later on Saturday a mile or so east of Thayer, where Karpis had abandoned it, and the gang was soon traced to the nearby McClelland farmhouse. Described as a four-room cottage on a high knoll back away from the road, the house reportedly offered a view of the surrounding countryside for miles around, and by the time authorities arrived, the birds had flown. In their haste to escape, the renters had left behind papers definitely identifying them as the Barker-Karpis gang, and photographs of most of the gang members, including Kate Barker, were also discovered. Much of the merchandise taken in the burglary of the McCallon store was recovered as well.

Funeral services for Sheriff Kelly were held on Monday, December 21. Shortly afterward, his widow, Lulu Kelly, was selected to fill his unexpired term as sheriff of Howell County. One of her first actions was to offer, jointly with the West Plains police chief, rewards for the arrest and conviction of the Barker-Karpis gang members, including $100 for "Old Lady Arrie Barker, mother of Fred Barker." This was apparently the first official notice by law enforcement of Ma Barker, who would go on to become infamous as a reputed leader of the gang, although she was, in fact, mostly just an overindulgent mother who felt her villainous sons could do no wrong.

Sources: FBI files, Howell County Gazette, West Plains Journal.

THE MYSTERIOUS LEGEND OF MA BARKER

Was she the mastermind behind the crime of her son's gang activities? Or as J. Edgar Hoover called "a monument to the evils of parental indulgence." Perhaps she was simply a mother who chose to believe her sons were driven to crime by hard times and persecution by authorities.

It's a mystery why Ma Barker brought her gang of sons to Thayer, Missouri in Oregon County to hide out because they had mostly settled in suburbs of cities to commit crimes. But it's postulated that William Weaver, a member of their gang who was born and raised in the Myatt, Arkansas area and whose story is related in another chapter in this book, convinced them that they would be safe from getting arrested in this remote area.

They rented what was called the J.D. Ary farm east of Thayer, Missouri in 1931. A barn was used as target practice and the shell holes were visible for years afterward. While in Thayer, the gang had their cars serviced at the old Goldie Trimble garage, now Forschler's Napa Auto Parts. One local story was that the sons went to the Mammoth Springs Reunion, pretended to be women, and tried to steal railroad men's payday money.

They would drive to surrounding communities to commit crimes.

The Encylopedia of Arkansas History and Culture states that:

"Although most well known for committing crimes throughout the Midwest, the gang's first murder was of a town marshal in Pocahontas (Randolph County), and members later holed up in Hot Springs (Garland County).

Before daylight on November 8, 1931, Fred Barker, William Weaver, and quite possibly Alvin Karpis were driving around the town of Pocahontas looking for places to rob. Their vehicle stopped to allow Weaver to answer a call of nature while the night marshal of the town, Manley Jackson, began jotting down the car's license plate number. Jackson, who had been on patrol most of the night, was summoned into the car at gunpoint by Fred Barker. The officer was driven several miles outside of Pocahontas, and Barker shot him numerous times in the back with a .45 caliber pistol. His body was found later in the day, at about 11:00 a.m., by local residents Charles Johnson and his wife.

Soon after the murder of Jackson, two local men—Lige Dame and Earl Decker—were accused and convicted of the crime. Dame eventually confessed to the murder, but he repudiated his statements several times in the months and years afterward. In his confession, he accused the Pocahontas chief of police, John G. Slayton, of hiring him to commit the murder. It was not until the 1971 publishing of Alvin Karpis's autobiography that the murder of the night marshal was attributed in detail to Fred Barker. This incident with the night marshal marked a beginning of the evolution of the Barker-Karpis Gang."

Excerpts from FBI Records IC #7-576 from November 19, 1936 entitled The Kidnapping of Edward George Bremer, St. Paul, Minnesota.

History and Early Association of the Karpis-Barker Gang Prior to the Abduction of Mr. Bremer told the history of the gang and it's links to the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, Arkansas and the Cookson Hills of Oklahoma. The nucleus of the Karpis-Barker Gang was Ma Barker and her son with their forays into cities to rob banks using modern machine guns and fast automobiles.

Ma Barker was Arizona Barker with sons Herman, Lloyd, Fred and Arthur and was born in the vicinity of Ash Grove, MO, known as the Ozark country, of Scotch-Irish parents.

The FBI Report stated, "Ma Barker in the formative period of her sons' lives was probably just an average mother of a family which had no aspirations or evidenced no desire to maintain any high plane socially. They were poor and existed through no prolific support from Ma's husband, George Barker, who was more a less a shiftless individual, but who later profited from the criminal earnings of his wife and sons, but he did not put himself into such a position that he could be later termed a member of the gang. During the time his wife and sons, with other members of their gang, were roving the country perpetrating bank robberies and kidnappings, George Barker was content to remain in the vicinity of Joplin, Missouri and operate a small filling station until such time as he was to share in the estate of his deceased wife and his deceased son, Fred Barker."

She separated from George Barker in 1928 after the time that Herman, Lloyd, and Arthur received prison sentences. She paid for her son's lawyers by harboring fugitives in her house. The reports stated, "It is possible that Kate became loose in her moral life. She was seen with a neighbor of hers who was having outside dates with other men and was known to be generally in the company of other men in the vicinity of Tulsa, OK. She lived with her sons at such periods when they were released from their penitentiary sentences and cast her lot with their lawlessness and criminal activities. Inasmuch as she was more intelligent than any of her sons, she ruled them with the iron will and found this expression of dominance easily exerted because of the submission of her sons Fred and Arthur."

Ma Barker liked to live well. She purchased expensive clothing, furniture and other necessities from the spoils of her sons' crimes. She was jealous of her boys and did not wish to have them associate with girl friends causing dissention among other women of the gang who avoided her.

Ma Barker did have a paramour, one Arthur V. Dunlap, alias George Anderson, who didn't know what he was getting into. He lived with Ma Barker in Thayer and they were joined by her son, Fred who had been released from the Kansas State Penitentiary in 1931 where he made friends with Alvin Karpis.

After the West Plains, MO murder of Sheriff Kelly, Kate Barker, A. W. Dunlop, commonly known as "Old Man" Dunlop, Fred Barker and Alvin Karpis sought refuge in St. Paul, Minnesota they rented a house at 1031 South Roberts Street, West St. Paul, Minnesota. The fugitives who were then being sought by the various state law enforcement authorities did not lead normal lives at the Roberts Street address and this aroused the suspicions of the woman from whom the house was rented. The landlady observed that the

occupants when leaving the house and returning to it, carried a violin case. The woman's son noticed the photographs of Fred Barker and Alvin Karpis in a detective magazine, which indicated that they were wanted for the murder of Sheriff Kelly at West Plains, Missouri. On April 25, 1932, at about 1:00 A.M., the suspicious activities of the occupants of this house were related to officers of the St. Paul Police Department, who delayed going to the house in question in order to apprehend these people. Approximately six hours later, Fred Barker, Alvin Karpis, Kate Barker, and A. W. Dunlop had packed their belongings and hurriedly departed.

The following morning the body of A. W. Dunlop was found on the shores of Lake Freasted, near Webster, Wisconsin. It was stripped of clothing and an examination of the body disclosed that it had been shot three times at short range. Not far from the body there was found a bloodstained woman's glove. It is contended that Dunlop was killed by Fred Barker and Alvin Karpis, inasmuch as they believed he had tipped them off to the police.

Kate Barker and her son, Fred, with Alvin Karpis, found it necessary to temporarily leave St. Paul, Minnesota and find another refuge due to the investigation by law enforcement agencies of the murder of "Old Man" Dunlop. These fugitives proceeded to Kansas City, Missouri, where under the disguise of being respectable citizens, they established a residence in an exclusive residential district known as the Country Club Plaza. Alvin Karpis posed as the son of Kate Barker and had frequently referred to their "sons" as being in the "insurance business." At Kansas City, Missouri, Fred Barker and Alvin Karpis threw in their lot with other "hoodlums."

These latter individuals were Francis Keating and Thomas Holden, escaped Federal prisoners from the United States Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas, Harvey Bailey, a nationally known bank robber and Larry De Vol. The gang robbed the Fort Scott, Kansas Bank on June 17, 1932.

On December 16, 1932 Fred Barker, "Doc" Barker, Larry De Vol, Alvin Karpis, William Weaver, Verne Miller and Jess Doyle robbed the Third Northwestern Bank of Minneapolis at Minneapolis, Minnesota and during the perpetration of the robbery, two police officers and a civilian were murdered by machine-gun bullets fired by members of this gang.

They moved to Reno, NV and some moved to Chicago and back to St. Paul, Minnesota. They decided more money could be made from kidnapping and ransoming than bank robbing. They kidnapped Edward G. Breme, a banker and the son of an Adolph Brenner, part-owner of Jacob Schridt Brewing Company. Over a period of months, a ransom was paid and Bremer was returned home.

MA BARKER KILLED

The gang split up and continued to commit crimes. Ma Barker and Fred Barker moved to Ocala, Florida where the FBI tracked them down and killed them using tear gas bombs, rifles, and machine guns. Ma Barker battled until death, clutching her machine gun, returning fire with fire. The FBI agents found $114,000 in $1,000 bills which had been exchanged in Havana, Cuba as ransom money. They also found currency of $293 and a small arsenal of weapons: 2 Thompson submachine gun, 1 Browning.12 gauge automatic shotguns, 1 Remington.12 gauge pump shotgun, 2 .45 caliber automatic pistols,1.33 caliber Winchester rifle, 1 .380 caliber Colt automatic pistol, Machine gun drums, automatic pistol clips and a quantity of ammunition

One of her sons “Doc” Barker was sent to Alcatraz in San Francisco and tried to escape. They were shot on the raft on a foggy night.

The investigation established that five individuals had endeavored to construct a raft of driftwood, lumber and other available material, using clothes and strips of sheets to bind the raft together. The investigation further established that due to the concerted efforts of these notorious criminals, it had taken them approximately one month of detailed planning to perfect their means of escape and that each of the five prisoners had worked on the bars in his respective cell, when the time would allow, during the night and day. It was likewise learned that the escape was planned by "Doc" Barker and though it had been ready for at least a month, their only reason for waiting was for the right foggy night to appear. It was ascertained that the saws and screw-jack, the implements used by the prisoners, were smuggled into the isolation ward many weeks before by Stamphill, who later committed a violation of prison rules expressly so he might be placed in the isolation ward into which he had already snuggled the tools to be used in effecting the escape. The saw blades went through prisoner inspection in view of the fact that they had been glued into musical instruments believed. to be mouth harps. Following the use of the blades, they were thrown in the lavatories to avoid being found.

Ma Barker

“Doc" Barker died on the evening of January 13, 1939, in the prison hospital at Alcatraz. It was later learned after he was apprehended, Barker, while lying on his deathbed, exclaimed to one of the guards, "I am crazy as Hell. I should never have tried it." This fateful day truly proved to be unlucky for "Doc" Barker as it was in fact Friday, the thirteenth.

To see a chronological list of the Ma Barker Gang lives and crimes, link to: http://www.not-frisco.com/colmatales/barker/barkertl.html

Thayer Railroad Hotel from the Tracks looking up at the Opera House

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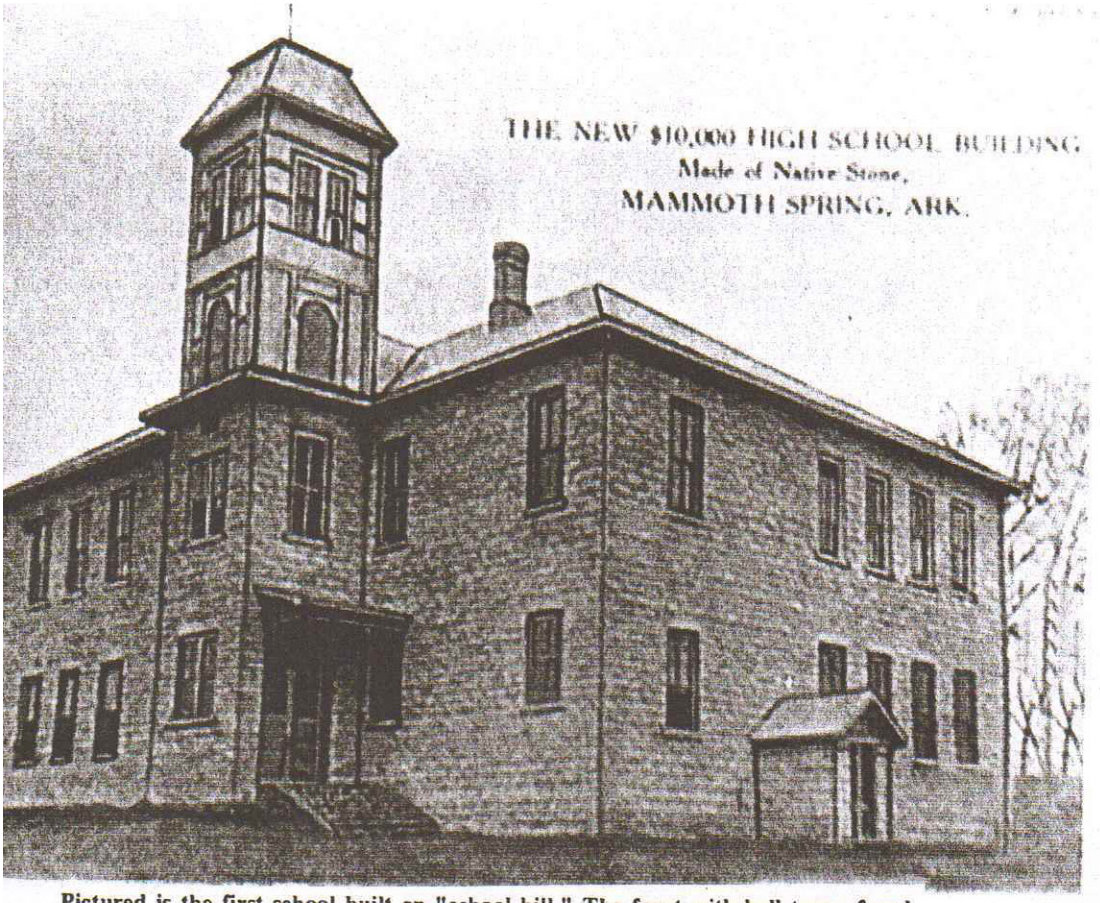

Pictured is the first school built on "school hill." The front with bell tower faced east over looking Spring River. There was a center hallway with a staircase. There were also stairs in the bell tower. The first floor housed the elementary grades with two grades to a room. The second floor contained the study hall as well as class rooms for high school. Picture courtesy the Steve Atkins family